











A POLITICAL MEMOIR  
1880-92







JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

1836-1914

From a photograph taken about 1880

A  
POLITICAL  
MEMOIR

1880-92

by  
JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

Edited from the original manuscript by  
C. H. D. HOWARD

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the last week of April 1880 Gladstone was engaged in forming his second administration. Somewhat reluctantly he offered the presidency of the Board of Trade, together with a seat in the Cabinet, to the junior member for Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain.

Chamberlain was in his forty-fourth year, and with his black hair and slim build appeared younger. He wore side-whiskers, which were, however, destined before long to disappear. Twice married, he was now a widower with six children, to whom he was devoted. To the world at large he was known as a leading member of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party, a champion of dissenting interests, of free and unsectarian education and of disestablishment, an ally of republicans if not an avowed republican himself, a successful reforming mayor of Birmingham, and the master of the much-feared 'caucus'. His friends knew him also as a cheerful companion with wide interests, a clear and quick thinker, a fluent and frank talker, and, above all, as a man of abounding energy with an insatiable appetite for 'work to be done'. He had behind him a variety of valuable experience.

Born in 1836 in a substantial late-Georgian house at Camberwell, Joseph Chamberlain came of a family which for over a century had carried on a prosperous business in London as shoemakers.<sup>1</sup> The Chamberlains were Unitarians, and were proud to number among their ancestors one Richard Serjeant of Kidderminster, a minister who had been ejected from his living on 'Black Bartholomew's Day', 1662. At the age of sixteen Joseph entered the family business. Two years later his father went into partnership with a relation by marriage, John

<sup>1</sup> The account of Chamberlain's career that follows is based in the main on the late J. L. Garvin's *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, my use of which I should like to acknowledge, although I consider that its treatment of certain episodes is in need of correction.

Sutton Nettlefold, owner of a screw-factory at Birmingham, and young Joseph was dispatched to the midland town to represent his father's interests. It was the beginning of an association with Birmingham that was to last for the rest of his life.

There followed a period during which much of his time was necessarily devoted to building the fortunes of the firm of Nettlefold and Chamberlain. But at the age of thirty-two he came to the fore in politics in a manner that was entirely in accordance with the dissenting tradition in which he had been bred. On the morrow of the Liberal victory in the General Election of 1868 the National Education League was founded in Birmingham. Its aim was: 'The establishment of a system which shall secure the education of every child in the country.' The cost of this system was to be defrayed by local rates, supplemented by Government grants. All schools that received rate-aid were to be 'free' (that is to say, were not to charge fees) and unsectarian. Chamberlain, although not the chairman, was the driving force of the League. His work for it, and more particularly his efforts first to shape and then to amend Forster's Education Act of 1870, made him known outside Birmingham, and brought him into touch with the two men who for more than a decade were to be his closest friends and allies—Sir Charles Dilke, seven years his junior but already a member of the House of Commons and well known both for his best-seller, *Greater Britain*, and for his republican sympathies, and John Morley, editor of the brilliant *Fortnightly Review*. His friendship with William (soon to be Sir William) Harcourt, never so intimate as that with Dilke and Morley but nevertheless an important link between the left and centre of the Liberal Party, dates from the same period.

The year 1870 saw Chamberlain's election to the first Birmingham School-Board, 1873 the beginning of his mayoralty—a landmark in the history of municipal enterprise and slum-clearance. In 1874 he stood for Parliament at Sheffield, and shared in the general Liberal debacle. A few months later he sold his share in the screw-business, in which he had made a considerable, although not a great, fortune. Henceforth politics were to be his main occupation.

In 1870 Chamberlain was elected to Parliament at a by-election as one of the three members for Birmingham. But in the years that followed he was known less as a debater in the House of Commons, although his performance there was not negligible, than as the master of the famous Birmingham 'caucus'. This comprised an association, to which all Liberals in Birmingham had the right to belong, without payment of subscription, and which elected a 'Great Committee of the Six Hundred'. Of the members of the latter, Chamberlain claimed, 'three-quarters . . . are working-men'. The 'caucus' was a powerful weapon in the hands of Chamberlain and his fellow-Radicals against the old-fashioned Liberals or 'Whigs' in the constituency, and the Birmingham model was widely imitated in other boroughs. In 1877 Chamberlain added a superstructure in the shape of the National Liberal Federation, which took over the work of the Education League, linked the local caucuses and provided a national platform for their spokesmen. Chamberlain ensured that Birmingham should be the headquarters of the new organization, and it was he who persuaded Gladstone to address its first meeting. On April 6, 1880, when the election results were coming in, Chamberlain was able to write to Gladstone: 'Out of 57 Boroughs where the so-called "Caucus" exists it has been victorious in 50.'

Party organization by itself, however, can do little to achieve political victory. A programme is also necessary. As Chamberlain wrote in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1878, 'The Caucus does not make opinion, it only expresses it. . . . All the machinery in the world will not rouse enthusiasm in England unless there is a solid foundation of genuine and earnest feeling to work upon.' His own formula was: 'Free Schools, Free Land and Free Church,' by which he meant gratuitous education, the creation of small-holdings and disestablishment. The issues that dominated the General Election of 1880, however, were not Chamberlain's but Gladstone's. The caucuses indeed played their part in the organization of victory. But the Radical programme was overshadowed by the Midlothian campaign.

It was no doubt his consciousness of the overwhelming

importance of his own contribution to victory that led Gladstone to pay such scant respect to the claims of the Radicals to office in the new Government. John Bright was of course given a seat in the Cabinet. But Bright's Radicalism was that of an older generation; at heart he had little sympathy either with Chamberlain's policy or with his methods. George Otto Trevelyan, a leading advocate of the extension of the county franchise, was left out altogether, and Dilke obtained only a junior appointment. Even Chamberlain would have been offered only a subordinate post, but for a compact with Dilke by which the two friends agreed to refuse office altogether unless the claims of both were satisfied.

It is with this 'forced entry' into Gladstone's Cabinet that Chamberlain's memoir commences. The five years that followed saw an administration which deeply disappointed its Radical supporters by coercion in Ireland, intervention in Egypt, and by the meagreness of its legislative achievement. Much valuable parliamentary time was lost, and the only really popular measure affecting English, as distinct from Irish, interests to reach the statute-book was the Franchise Act of 1884. A bill for the reform of local government in the counties, promised in 1881, had not even been introduced when the Government fell four years later. Gladstone and his colleagues also contrived, by ceding to the Boers after Majuba the measure of independence which they had not given as a matter of right before, by the Kilmainham 'treaty' with Parnell, and above all by their failure to save Gordon, to lay themselves open to damaging criticism by their Conservative opponents. Finally, in 1885, with a General Election once again approaching, the Cabinet found itself hopelessly divided on the question of the renewal of the Irish Crimes Act passed after the Phoenix Park murders and now about to expire. Weeks of discussion failed to resolve the deadlock, and, finally, a defeat on the Budget on June 8, 1885, enabled Gladstone to proffer the resignation of the Government and thus avoid admitting publicly its failure to agree on Irish policy.

Despite his comparatively minor office Chamberlain was intimately concerned with nearly all the most dramatic and

controversial episodes of these five years. He opposed, at least for a time, Forster's policy of coercion in Ireland. He acted as the link between the Cabinet and Captain O'Shea, the negotiator of the Kilmainham 'treaty', which brought about the resignation of Forster, whom many people expected him to succeed as Chief Secretary. It was at his house in Prince's Gate that Parnell called on the morrow of the Phoenix Park murders. He acted as Cabinet spokesman on South African affairs in the House of Commons—a responsibility which may well have served to direct his interest increasingly towards colonial policy. In the summer of 1882 he pressed for intervention in Egypt. He led the agitation against the House of Lords' refusal to pass the Franchise Bill unaccompanied by a bill for the redistribution of seats, and was widely believed to be responsible for the riot at Aston in which that agitation culminated. In 1885 he was the principal opponent, within the Cabinet, of Spencer's Irish policy, and attempted, again through the agency of O'Shea, to reach an agreement with Parnell on the basis of a limited Crimes Bill and a local government scheme embracing, not only the reform of county government in Ireland, but the creation of an Irish 'central board' with some legislative powers. His resignation and that of Dilke were actually in Gladstone's hands at the moment of the Government's defeat on the Budget—a defeat which both he and Gladstone were widely suspected of having organized.

The criticism that his share in the events of 1880-5 brought from 'Whigs' and Conservatives did not worry Chamberlain unduly. The criticism of Radicals was another matter, however, and throughout the Gladstone administration he was acutely aware of the disappointment experienced by his own supporters. The resignation of the Government afforded him, therefore, a welcome opportunity to dissociate himself from the 'Whig' wing of the party and to rally his old supporters, the newly-enfranchised agricultural labourers, and, if possible, the Irish voters in Great Britain to a revived Radical programme, among whose objects was now included the concession of 'the widest possible self-government to Ireland, which is consistent with the integrity of the Empire'. The hoped-for Irish alliance did not

materialize. Indeed, Parnell pointedly ignored Chamberlain's overtures and temporarily threw in his lot with the Conservatives. But at the General Election in the autumn of 1885 Chamberlain's campaign for what the arch-Whig Goschen termed the 'unauthorized programme'—to distinguish it from the authorized Liberal Party programme, set forth in Gladstone's address to the electors of Midlothian—marked the zenith of his power as a Radical. The 'unauthorized programme' was in fact a truncated version of the 'Free Schools, Free Land and Free Church' programme of the 'seventies. 'Free Church' was shelved in 1885 in deference to Gladstone; 'Free Schools' did not prove an electoral asset; 'Free Land', however, which now reappeared under the new slogan of 'Three Acres and a Cow', swept the county constituencies. The Liberal Party achieved a majority of more than eighty over the Conservatives. But Parnell's followers totalled eighty-six. A Liberal Government was not possible without Irish support. Rather than join a Government in such circumstances both Chamberlain and Dilke preferred to leave the Conservatives in office.

Within a few months of the 1885 General Election Chamberlain found himself separated from Gladstone and from most of his friends on the issue of the Irish Home Rule Bill, which was supported by several of those, including Spencer, who had opposed his own much more modest 'central board' scheme. Meanwhile, the career of Dilke, his most trusted friend, had ended in the divorce court. In 1891, when Chamberlain wrote the main part of his memoir, he had broken with the Liberal Party and had played a major part in bringing about its defeat in 1886 both in the House of Commons and in the constituencies. The Round Table Conference of 1887, at which Chamberlain and his fellow Liberal Unionist, Trevelyan, had attempted to reach agreement on Irish policy with Harcourt, Morley and Herschell (Lord Chancellor in Gladstone's last two Cabinets), had exacerbated feelings that were already bitter, especially as Trevelyan soon afterwards returned to the Gladstonian fold. Chamberlain had had to endure repeated accusations of disloyalty to Gladstone, of conspiracy against Forster, of betrayal



of Liberal principles, and of inconsistency in his advocacy of 'self-government' for Ireland in 1885 and his opposition to the Home Rule Bill twelve months later. He had been compared unfavourably with Judas Iscariot by Henry Labouchere, once his ardent supporter, and had had to listen to variations on this theme by Irish members in the House of Commons. Most mortifying of all, perhaps, he had been publicly accused by Parnell of having intrigued behind the backs of his colleagues in Gladstone's 1880-5 Cabinet and of having given away Cabinet secrets in the hope of securing personal advantage.

*A Political Memoir* is Chamberlain's defence, written, no doubt, partly for his own satisfaction, partly for the ear of posterity, against the charges brought against him in the course of a decade, during which he had been one of the most abused men in English public life. It is a defence of his loyalty to Gladstone and to his own principles in the difficult circumstances of 1880-5, and of the consistency of his opposition to an Irish Parliament both before and after the Hawarden 'kite'. It is also an indictment of Gladstone. Of the latter Chamberlain wrote on January 23, 1891, to Jesse Collings (his unquestioning lieutenant in both his Radical and Unionist periods): 'I have just finished the history of 1885. It is a record of unexampled duplicity, concealment and even actual falsehood on the part of the G.O.M.' Nor does Chamberlain's narrative spare Parnell, Harcourt, Spencer, Labouchere or Trevelyan.

Of the strength of Chamberlain's case it is for the reader to judge. But that he presents a vigorous narrative and a wealth of contemporary documents is not likely to be disputed; nor that *A Political Memoir* affords no little insight into the mind of an outstandingly able man in an age that was not deficient in men of ability.



## NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE title under which Joseph Chamberlain's record of the events of 1880-92 is now published was chosen by the editor. The MS. itself bears no title, and only the sixth and ninth chapters have any heading other than a date. An examination of Chamberlain's papers has not revealed any title that he used for the work as a whole. In his *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* the late J. L. Garvin referred to the document, of which he made considerable—although not always careful—use, as the 'Memorandum of Events, 1880-92'. There seems to be no reason why this title should enjoy any special sanctity.

*A Political Memoir* was written at three distinct periods. The second chapter is a memorandum drawn up at Gladstone's request, after notice had been given in the House of Commons on November 14, 1882, of a motion for the appointment of a committee of enquiry into the Kilmainham 'treaty'. Chapters I and III—X were written in 1891. The final chapter was added in 1892.

The principal materials at Chamberlain's disposal were his correspondence, memoranda and press-cuttings. He does not appear to have kept a diary at this period. He had, however, a copy of an extract from O'Shea's diary relating to the events of April and May 1885, which O'Shea probably gave him at the time of the controversy with Parnell in the correspondence columns of *The Times* in 1888, and of the use of which there is evidence in the relevant passage in Chamberlain's narrative. He also had Dilke's record of the events of the period (subsequently published in *The Life of Sir Charles Dilke* by Stephen Gwynn and G. M. Tuckwell), which he used to check the accuracy of his own narrative.

The MS. of *A Political Memoir* is in the hand-writing of three amanuenses, to whom Chamberlain dictated the different

sections of the work at the three periods mentioned. His method was evidently to dictate the narrative, quoting short passages from certain documents and giving his amanuenses other documents to be transcribed *in extenso*. He then read through the MS., making corrections and additions in his own hand-writing. Several of the additions allude to Dilke's memoir.

Unfortunately, Chamberlain's correction of the MS. was not very thorough, and this has complicated the task of editing it. Two distinct problems have had to be solved; that presented by the narrative part of *A Political Memoir*, and that of the numerous documents quoted therein.

In the narrative a number of small spelling mistakes and 'slips of the pen' have been corrected. Statements which, although factually incorrect, evidently represent what Chamberlain believed to be true, have not been altered, but, whenever possible, attention has been drawn to them in a footnote. No attempt has been made, however, to criticize Chamberlain's often controversial judgments on men and events. Occasional stylistic infelicities have also been left unaltered, as have the punctuation and capitalization. All abbreviated words have been written in full.

By far the most numerous corrections, however, have been necessitated by the quotations from documents. It is evident that Chamberlain was not always careful to ensure that the extracts from documents that he dictated were exact renderings of the originals; nor did he always distinguish between a quotation from a document and a mere paraphrase. The consequence is that many of the apparent quotations, which appear in the MS. between inverted commas, are extremely inaccurate. The versions of all documents or extracts from documents in the MS. have therefore, whenever possible, been compared with the original in-letters and with the copies of out-letters and memoranda. The originals of Chamberlain's letters to Gladstone and Dilke, preserved at the British Museum, and the relevant press-files have also been examined. Where it is evident that a passage that appears between inverted commas in the MS. is only a paraphrase of the words ostensibly quoted, the inverted

commas have been omitted and attention called to the omission in a footnote. Where, however, it appears that a quotation was intended but has been inaccurately given, the correct version has been printed, and, if drastic correction has been necessary, the fact noted. Only minor corrections have been necessary in the case of documents quoted *in extenso*. Mistakes and omissions that occur in the documents themselves have not, of course, been rectified. Abbreviated words have, however, been printed in full, except when to do so (e.g. by substituting 'Mr Gladstone' for 'Mr G.') would alter the character of a letter. Foreign words and titles of newspapers have been printed in italics. The names and addresses of the recipients of letters, which are usually given at the end of letters, have been omitted, except when the recipient is addressed at the beginning of the letter as 'Dear Sir', instead of by his surname. The word 'signed', invariably added by Chamberlain's amanuenses to each copy of a signature, has been omitted.

Unfortunately, a certain number of documents are missing from the Chamberlain Papers, and it has not always been possible, therefore, to compare the version of a letter given in the MS. of Chamberlain's memoir with the original MS. The missing original MS. in-letters are: O'Shea to Chamberlain, April 15, 18, 21, 23 (two letters), 24 and 26, and May 1, 1882; Morley to Chamberlain, April 6 and 7, 1886, August 14 and September 21, 1887, May 1, and August 15, 1888, January 26, 1889, February 24, 1890 and October 29, 1891. The missing copies of out-letters are: to O'Shea, April 17 and 25, 1882; to Morley, January 21, 1885, and August 16, 1888; to Labouchere April 17, and June 5, 1886. Chamberlain's memorandum of his conversation with O'Shea, April 22, 1882, O'Shea's copy of Parnell's letter of April 28, 1882, and Morley's copy of Gladstone's letter of August 11, 1888, are also missing.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN was born at Camberwell Grove, London, on July 8, 1836, and died at Highbury, Birmingham, on July 2, 1914. He was married three times: in 1861 to Harriet Kenrick, of Birmingham, who died in 1863; in 1868 to Florence Kenrick (cousin of his first wife), who died in 1875; in 1888 to Mary Endicott, of Salem, Massachusetts, now Mrs Carnegie.

The important dates of his career are:

1850-52 At University College School, London.

1854 Entered the firm of Nettlefold and Chamberlain, Birmingham.

1873-76 Mayor of Birmingham.

1876-85 M.P. for Birmingham.

1880-85 President of the Board of Trade in Gladstone's second Cabinet.

1885-1914 M.P. for the Western Division of Birmingham.

1886 President of the Local Government Board in Gladstone's third Cabinet.

1892-1906 Leader of the Liberal Unionist Party in the House of Commons.

1895-1903 Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Biographical notes on the persons mentioned in the text will be found in the Index.

## CHAPTER I

1880

LORD BEACONSFIELD'S Government retained to the last a large majority in the House of Commons, but there were signs apparent to every intelligent observer that their popularity was waning in the country. It is possible that, when Lord Beaconsfield returned from Berlin bringing 'peace with honour', a dissolution might have produced a Conservative majority, although it is doubtful whether, even then, the majority of the electors were really satisfied with the policy which had the support of the noisiest portion of the community. In any case, the proof which was subsequently afforded of the illusory character of the advantages attributed to Lord Beaconsfield's diplomacy, and the results of his policy in Afghanistan and especially in South Africa, destroyed effectually any transient popularity and made defeat absolutely certain. At home the legislation of the Government had been in the last two years especially ineffective and unsatisfactory, and the scheme devised by Mr Cross for the purchase of the London waterworks was universally condemned as a monument of unwise and extravagant legislation. The general election which took place in April gave the Liberals a majority of 113, and Lord Beaconsfield resigned on April 21. After ineffectual endeavours to induce Lord Hartington and Lord Granville to form a Government the Queen entrusted Mr Gladstone with the duty. He completed his arrangements by the beginning of May and the first Cabinet was held on May 3.

The prospects of the Radical Party had been the subject of much consultation between Sir Charles Dilke and myself. We thought that it was possible, and even probable, that no offer would be made to us, or that if we were asked to join the Government it would only be in a subordinate position. We decided

that in this case it would be our duty to decline and as independent members to give a general support to the Government while endeavouring to secure the progressive character of its legislation. We felt that if we accepted subordinate positions without Cabinet rank we should be silenced in the House of Commons and at the same time unable to exercise any influence in the Radical direction on the decisions of the Government.

On April 4 I was in Birmingham, but at Dilke's earnest request I came up to London<sup>1</sup> and stayed with him during the formation of the Government. We heard through Harcourt that Mr Gladstone was unwilling to offer the Cabinet to any members who had not previously held official positions, and that he intended to ask us to fill subordinate posts. We agreed in this event to maintain the attitude or which we had previously resolved. I told Harcourt our views and said that if the Cabinet was offered to Dilke I would serve in any subordinate office—or would give a cordial support to the Government without office.

In the first instance Mr Gladstone sent for Dilke, and strongly pressed him to accept the Under-Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs. Dilke stated our views and said that unless one of us was in the Cabinet we would prefer to remain altogether independent. Mr Gladstone urged him strongly to alter his decision and intimated that the Secretaryship of the Treasury might be offered to me, but Dilke steadily maintained our original contention.

At a second interview, however, held a day or two afterwards, Mr Gladstone informed Dilke that he proposed to offer me the Presidency of the Board of Trade and Dilke at once agreed to accept the Under-Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs. He came to me with the news at the Reform Club and I went immediately to Mr Gladstone who made the offer according to his promise.

This arrangement was altogether unexpected by me. I had assumed that if either of us were asked to join the sacred circle Dilke's claims, owing to the greater length of his services in

<sup>1</sup> On April 25, 1880. (J. L. Garvin, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, i. 297.)



Parliament and to his undoubted position in the House of Commons, would be held pre-eminent. I represented this to Mr Gladstone but he put my objections aside, saying, among other things, that he had been strongly urged by Mr Bright to give me the appointment. I felt so strongly, however, the difficulties in which I should be placed and the jealousies which I should be likely to excite that towards the close of the conversation I told Mr Gladstone that, although for the reasons which Dilke had already given, we thought that we ought not to accept office, which would close our mouths without giving us any influence in maintaining our Radical views, yet, that under the circumstances I would, if he desired it, accept the Secretaryship of the Treasury and endeavour to persuade Dilke to agree to this and to join the Government with me as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Mr Gladstone thanked me, but said that having fully considered the matter he still maintained his original offer and requested me to accept the Board of Trade with a seat in the Cabinet.

As I expected, the announcement of this arrangement excited a good deal of discontent and ill-feeling. Dilke himself, although he must have been disappointed at not receiving the offer of a higher office, behaved admirably; but there were many other Radicals who thought that their claims were as good or better than any that I could put forward and were inclined to resent the quick promotion which I had, however unwillingly, secured.

The composition of the Cabinet was almost wholly Whig or moderate Liberal. Mr Gladstone indeed was himself often more Liberal than the majority of his colleagues, but on these occasions he could only count on the support of Mr Bright and myself.

Differences of opinion showed themselves from the first, and frequently threatened to break up the Government. They undoubtedly led to some vacillation of purpose and to compromises which detracted from the unity and consistency of the Government. Throughout its existence its members were frequently called upon to defend in the country resolutions from which they dissented or to which they gave only a qualified

support. At the same time there existed on the whole a very good feeling and on both sides there was an anxious desire to remove differences and to secure unanimous agreement by mutual concession.

In the first discussion as to the general policy of the Government I stood alone in urging a complete reversal of the general policy of Lord Beaconsfield which I maintained had been condemned by the nation. I wanted to recall at once Sir Bartle Frere,<sup>1</sup> to reconsider the annexation of the Transvaal and to recall Sir Henry Elliot.<sup>2</sup> For none of these proposals could I meet with any support at the time. I also urged the importance of dealing immediately with the question of the extension of the franchise, but Mr Gladstone considered that this subject, entailing as it would a new dissolution, ought to be deferred till towards the close of the Parliament just elected. It was accordingly decided in the short session which was about to commence that certain minor, although important questions, should be immediately dealt with, leaving questions of greater magnitude, and especially legislation for Ireland, to the succeeding session.

I pressed Sir William Harcourt to take up the Water question and to endeavour to make a new and more favourable arrangement with the London Companies. I pointed out that the fear of competition—if they pressed their claims too hard and Parliament was in consequence to give alternative powers of supply to a London representative body—would probably lead them to be moderate.

Harcourt, however, was unwilling to enter on such a task and appointed a Committee of which he was Chairman and I was a member to consider the proposals of the late Government.

On this Committee he used all his influence to discredit the proposals of the late Government but did not suggest any

<sup>1</sup> Frere had been Governor of the Cape of Good Hope and High Commissioner in South Africa at the time of the Zulu War, 1879, for which he had been held responsible.

<sup>2</sup> Ambassador in Constantinople, 1867–77, in Vienna, 1877–84. In 1877 he had been suspected of encouraging the Porte to resist the demands of the powers. In 1880 he obtained a disavowal by Gladstone of an attack on the Austro-Hungarian Government.

alternative except to postpone the whole matter till a Representative Body was established which would deal with the subject.

• A great opportunity was thus lost of conferring a practical benefit on the population of the metropolis.

Parliament met on May 20 and the Government was confronted at the outset with difficulties arising out of the election of Mr Bradlaugh and the refusal of the House of Commons to allow him to take the oath. The Cabinet were unanimous in regard to this subject, but the pressure of Nonconformist opinion caused a certain number of their supporters to leave them on this question, and its interposition at the very commencement of the life of the Government undoubtedly weakened it at the moment and led subsequently to much waste of time.

It was, however, the Irish Question which was the cause of the most serious difference of opinion and of the greatest difficulties which assailed the Government during the whole of their term of office. The Land League had been brought into notice in the preceding year and was beginning to extend its influence, and to make its evil counsels felt. There was much real distress owing to bad harvests and there were admittedly many crying evils in the administration and above all in the legislation affecting the tenure of land which called loudly for redress. The majority—at least of the Liberal Party—were pledged to give early attention to the redress of all grievances, and it was the hope of all of them, and the conviction of the Radical section, that a wise and Liberal policy of reform would do much to conciliate the Irish people and would render powerless the efforts of political agitators who were seeking to take advantage of their just discontent.

Throughout the discussions which ensued in the Cabinet I steadily maintained the importance of giving a thorough trial to conciliatory and remedial measures. I opposed coercion, not because I assumed that coercion might never be necessary, but because I thought it should only come when other means had failed, and that the admitted grievances of the Irish people should be removed before, or at least concurrently with, any proposal for strengthening the criminal law.

In maintaining these views I found myself almost always in agreement with Mr Gladstone and Mr Bright but frequently in divergence with Mr Forster. If the latter had been uniformly firm and consistent in his demand for repressive measures he would undoubtedly have had the support of the majority of the Cabinet, and the minority must have given way or retired. But throughout the early days of the controversy Forster never appeared to have absolutely made up his mind. He leaned towards coercion but he also recognized the parliamentary difficulties in which proposals for such legislation would land the Government and he constantly sought to throw some of the responsibility upon the Cabinet and was reluctant to take the whole himself. Those who opposed him believed he was too much under the influence of the officials of Dublin Castle and too ready to accept doubtful statistics without sufficient examination. We considered that he was asking for new powers before he had sufficiently tested the old ones and we insisted that by a premature resort to arbitrary measures he would prejudice the success of the remedial legislation, the necessity of which he recognized as fully as any of us.

The Peace Preservation Act passed by the late Government expired on June 1, and on May 13 Forster pressed for its renewal but without any great insistence. In addition to the general arguments against coercion it was pointed out that it would be impossible to pass the Bill through Parliament by the time the old Act expired, and under these circumstances the majority agreed that it was desirable to try the effect of conciliation, in the hope that this course, coupled with the promise of remedial legislation, would produce a better feeling in Ireland and stay the rising tide of agitation.

The Parnellite members, however, were not content to await the promised reforms and they insisted that some legislation should be instantly undertaken in order to bring about a stay of the evictions which were being freely resorted to at the time. With Forster's full assent, and at his suggestion, the Compensation for Disturbance Bill was introduced and passed. The Government received no assistance from the Parnellites, and at one

time the difficulties seemed so serious that Hartington on July 2 urged the withdrawal of the Bill. At this time I told Forster that if he would nail his colours to the mast, and found it necessary in consequence to resign, Dilke and I would go out with him. The Bill however was proceeded with and was rejected by the House of Lords on August 2. Their action had a most unhappy influence on subsequent events. It was taken advantage of by the agitators and made the pretext for violent speeches and for intimidation followed by boycotting and outrage.

I thought at the time, and think still, that an Autumn Session should have been called and the Bill again introduced. This would have shown the earnest desire of the Government to alleviate the distress of the Irish tenants and would have gone far to disconcert the agitation.

On August 18 I circulated the following memorandum to the Cabinet:

[*Memorandum*]

Having regard to the impoverished condition of Ireland, and especially to the exceptional circumstances of the time, it is worth consideration whether present relief might not be best afforded by a well designed scheme of public works which would permanently benefit the country.

State assistance of this character has been found expedient in almost every civilized country except the United Kingdom and while it may be safe to trust all such undertakings to private enterprise in the case of a wealthy and active community such as that of England it may be undesirable to rely exclusively on private exertion in the case of Ireland.

A very large scheme has recently been initiated in France, and is known as the Freycinet scheme; and it would be well to obtain information in respect to it under the following heads:

1. As to the extent of the scheme; its probable cost; and the expectations of ultimate repayment and profit.
2. The nature of the works contemplated, and whether they include
  - a. Improved communications.
  - b. Drainage and reclamation of lands.
  - c. Aid to industrial enterprises.

3. The method adopted for selecting, examining, and finally approving the works to which assistance is granted. Was the preliminary enquiry made by the Central Department or by local authorities, or by both acting in concert?

4. How is the money to be raised and what provision, if any, is made for repayment?

J. CHAMBERLAIN

18/8/80.

Forster seemed to like the plan of public works and Dilke was asked to get information as to the details of the Freycinet scheme of public works in France.

Parliament was prorogued on September 7 and at the Cabinets which were held in the same month, and subsequently, Forster again raised the question of a Coercion Bill. Again the Cabinet were unwilling to consent. The Land Commission had been appointed to investigate the "whole question of the tenure of land and it was felt that until they reported no remedial measure could be introduced. In the meantime, a proposal of coercion would be calculated to destroy beforehand all chance of cordial acceptance for any land reform. The statistics of outrage, though unsatisfactory, did not compare unfavourably with previous times of distress and agitation, and it was generally felt that the clearest evidence of necessity ought to be forthcoming before a Government distinctly founded on the principle of conciliation asked for coercive powers.

In October it was resolved to prosecute Mr Parnell and the other leaders of the Land League and although I doubted the policy of this prosecution I accepted it as an alternative to the proposed suspension of the Habeas Corpus. While the prosecution was going on it afforded an additional argument to the opponents of coercion, as we were able to contend that the result of the application of the ordinary law should be seen before any extension of powers was asked for.

November 12. Dined at Harcourt's with Bright, Forster and James. I told Forster I could not agree to coercion without a

Land Bill. I proposed to see Mr Gladstone but Forster said it was not necessary as he had not yet made up his mind.

• On November 14, Morley wrote me that he had met Forster in London and had been told by him that he had not then made up his mind as to the necessity of coercion but he evidently thought that public opinion would force the Government to adopt stringent measures. This interview confirms what I have said as to Forster's vacillation. A week later he appears to have finally and unreservedly made up his mind.

At a Cabinet held November 15 Mr Gladstone proposed the creation of Grand Committees for England, Ireland, and Scotland. He was warmly supported by Bright and myself but the Cabinet were against him.

There were discussions at this, and subsequent Cabinets as to coercion, the argument turning largely on the necessity, alleged by Bright and myself, of accompanying any proposal that might be found necessary by a liberal measure of land reform.

At one of these Cabinets there was a warm discussion on the subject of the communications between Cabinet ministers and the press and this question was revived from time to time afterwards. The fact was that several of the ministers were in intimate relations with the Editors of newspapers. Thus, Forster was continually communicating with Chenery of *The Times*, and I believe with Mudford of the *Standard*. Dilke was intimate with Hill of the *Daily News*, and I was in constant intercourse with Morley, Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and Escott who was a writer at that time on the *Standard*.

In the course of the discussions it was pointed out that without special intercourse it was impossible to secure in the press an adequate defence of the decisions and policy of the Government. Whether the confidence made in any case overstepped what was right must be a matter of opinion, but as far as I myself know, nothing underhand or unfair was done by any member of the Government.

Later on a draft of the Irish Land Bill, which was a private Cabinet paper, was published in the *Standard*. At the time I thought it had leaked out through Forster but I believe now I

was wrong. He may have attributed it to me but it turned out that the particular draft which was printed was one of a small number that was not circulated generally to the Cabinet and was never in my possession at all. I shall have to recur to this question of relations with the press when I come to deal with the circumstances attending Forster's resignation in 1882.

On November 16 Mr Bright and I attended a meeting of the Junior Liberal Club in Birmingham when we both took the opportunity to speak on the Irish Question. I condemned the outrages which were taking place in Ireland and called on the Irish people to show their detestation of acts which were likely to ruin the cause which the most patriotic of them had at heart. But I also called attention to the real grievances which lay behind, and accounted for, the disaffection of Ireland. I urged that it was our duty to make the laws just, as well as to administer them fearlessly, and that it was unconstitutional at the first outbreak of disorder to suspend all the safeguards of liberty without endeavouring to remove the causes which had promoted and had instigated that disorder. Mr Bright spoke to much the same effect.

Forster's proposal was to call an Autumn Session of Parliament to pass a Coercion Act. We had refused to call an Autumn Session to undo the work of the Peers and to pass remedial legislation and it appeared to me monstrous to take this extraordinary course in order to promote a Bill for the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

On November 16 I wrote as follows to Mr Gladstone:

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
November 16, 1880.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

Just as I was starting for Birmingham last night, Mr Forster told me that he intended to propose on Wednesday the immediate suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

I put off my journey and called in Downing Street to see you,



but you were not at home and I was obliged to come down here to prepare for our great meeting to-night.

I should have endeavoured to see you last Friday, but Mr Forster recommended me not to trouble you, as he had not then made up his mind and hoped to avoid the necessity of an immediate resort to coercive measures. As matters stand I am compelled to trouble you and to say, as I do with the deepest regret and reluctance, that I think the proposal of Mr Forster so wrong in principle and so bad in policy that I could not conscientiously give it even a silent support.

If it be adopted by the Cabinet, I shall have no alternative but to retire from the Government, though I shall take this course with the greatest pain at being compelled to separate myself from colleagues whom I so highly esteem, and above all from a leader whom I have been proud to follow and in whose genius and love of justice and freedom I have the most implicit confidence.

I venture to state as briefly as possible my objections to Mr Forster's proposal.

I think it wrong in principle. Redress of acknowledged grievances should precede, or at least accompany the suspension of the safeguards of liberty. The widespread disaffection of the Irish people grows out of causes of just complaint, and it is empirical [*sic*] to try and crush the one without first enquiring into and dealing with the other.

I think the necessity for destroying the constitution in Ireland is not proved by the facts and statistics before us; is not capable of the 'clearest demonstration' which you stated at the Mansion House must precede action. The state of Ireland is no doubt deplorable, but the actual number of serious outrages, clearly due to the agrarian discontent and not arising from the personal motives which even in ordinary times lead to some crimes, is very small. In spite of the Land League rents are being fairly paid over the largest part of Ireland, and if it were possible to make a positive and definite statement of the intentions of the Government with regard to land reform, I believe the agitation would die out of itself.

I think that the suspension of Habeas Corpus will not, under present circumstances, prove an effectual repressive measure.

We are not in face of secret societies or of small knots of

conspirators, as in former times, whose removal from the scene would pacify the country. You might arrest half a county and still Captain Boycott's position would be as intolerable as ever, and Lord Leitrim's and Lord Mountmorres's murderers would go unpunished.

Lastly, I see the greatest difficulty in passing the Coercion Act through Parliament. A large number of Liberals in the country, though not the majority, are opposed to it unless accompanied by some definite scheme of reform;—the provincial Liberal press generally takes the same view;—and it is the papers which have always been most hostile to the Government which are clamouring for 'vigour'.

My objection to the course proposed, and my opinion of its difficulty would be modified though not removed, if it had been possible to accompany it by a strong Land Bill. I see the immense difficulty of doing this however, until the Commission has reported and the Government has had ample time to consider its plans.

One alternative has suggested itself to my mind and that is, if it be absolutely necessary to propose coercion in December, to accompany it with a short Bill in one clause suspending evictions for three months, pending the introduction of the Land Bill.

I am very sorry to add to your anxieties at such a time.

I have considered the subject with a deep sense of responsibility, and if, as I fear, you may differ from my conclusions, I trust you will believe that nothing but the strongest convictions of duty would have influenced my decision.

I am, my dear Mr Gladstone, with profound respect and with the most sincere thanks for all your kindness to me.

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

To this he replied:

*Private*

10 Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

November 17, 1880.

My dear Chamberlain,

I have received your letter and have read it I need hardly say with much anxiety.

To-day we shall have the advantage of a fuller and more general expression of views than has yet been afforded.

Should they appear, at first sight, to be irreconcilable, I hope that we shall come to no decision, but take at least a day or two to consider the matter, which in any case is one of very great gravity.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

I found that Dilke agreed with me that, unless the clearest necessity was shown by statistics of serious outrage, it would be contrary to all the pledges we had given to propose coercion without remedial legislation. We thought that by resigning we should incur temporary unpopularity as the current of public opinion in the country was running strongly in favour of coercive legislation but we resolved to face this if the Autumn Session were determined on.

On November 23 Forster sent me copy of his letter to Mr Gladstone published in his *Life*.<sup>1</sup> The blanks in the letter must be filled up 'Bright and Chamberlain'. In communicating his decision he says: 'I have written frankly and plainly as the importance of the subject demands, but I need not assure you both that I believe you are acting from a sense of duty, as I am myself.'

In the beginning of December the Cabinet finally decided not to call Parliament together until January.

At that time it was probable that the verdict would be given in the Dublin trials and we should also have more information on which to base our land legislation.

In the course of the first session of this Parliament I made one speech on South African affairs. On this occasion, and subsequently, Mr Gladstone asked me to answer for the Cabinet in reference to South African questions as the Secretary of State was in the Lords.

<sup>1</sup> T. Wemyss Reid, *Life of William Edward Forster* (1888), ii. 270-2.

1881

The new year opened with troubles in the Transvaal. The annexation had been made by Lord Beaconsfield's Government in 1877 and discontent had existed in the country ever since; but in December, 1880, the Boers openly revolted and this brought to a head the question which had been left in suspense when Mr Gladstone assumed office. The defeat of the British at Majuba Hill took place on February 27. Sir Evelyn Wood, who was in chief command at the time, brought up a large force with which he reported that he was able to completely defeat the Boers. He agreed, however, to an armistice with the full approval of the Government, and the negotiations, which took place subsequently, resulted in a convention and the retrocession of the Transvaal. There was some difference of opinion in the Cabinet but the majority, of whom I was one and which also included Mr Gladstone, refused to assent to further bloodshed in order to avenge the honour of the flag and came to the conclusion that the annexation had been made on incorrect information and ought to be repealed. It is, however, impossible to deny that the surrender was too long delayed. If, on assuming office, we had sent out a new Commissioner under new instructions carefully to re-examine the whole question, the annexation might, and would have been, cancelled without loss of prestige and as a voluntary act of justice and generosity. By postponing our decision we encouraged the Boers to adopt an arrogant attitude and laid ourselves open to the charge of having yielded only in the face of defeat.

On July 25 I spoke in the House in defence of the Government policy admitting, however, that it would have been wiser and better to have evacuated the country when we first came into office, and that we should have done so if we had known all that subsequently came to light.

The Speech<sup>1</sup> announced coercive legislation and also land reform and local government for Ireland. The result was a compromise between the opposing policies in the Cabinet. The

<sup>1</sup> The Queen's Speech.

Radicals obtained the simultaneous assurance of remedial legislation with the announcement of coercion. On the other hand the Bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and the Arms Bill were given precedence over the Land Bill, and the introduction of the latter was seriously prejudiced by the bitter hostility developed amongst the Irish members during the proceedings on the former.

The first of the coercive Bills, called the Protection of Life and Property Bill, passed the House of Commons on February 24 after twenty-two nights' discussion and with the help of Rules of Urgency which were resorted to both in Committee and on Report. Mr Bright joined with me in endeavouring to get the Arms Bill withdrawn, and several stormy discussions took place in the Cabinet on this subject. In the course of one of them Harcourt said, 'Coercion was like caviare—unpleasant at first to the palate but agreeable with use' [*sic*].<sup>1</sup> After varying and contradictory decisions it was finally settled to go on with the Bill which passed on March 21.

In the meantime the Parnell Trial had collapsed in Dublin where the jury disagreed in their verdict and had to be discharged.<sup>2</sup>

On April 6 the Land Bill was introduced by Mr Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll having previously resigned in consequence of his opposition to the principle of the measure.

The first draft of the Bill, as explained to the Cabinet by Mr Gladstone, contained provisions for Fair Rents and Free Sale but not for Fixity of Tenure. The futility of this arrangement was pointed out to him but he was obstinate and said he would resign sooner than accept a change. But at the next Cabinet, which was held within one or at least two days, without a word of explanation as to his reasons for the alteration he brought in an amended proposal in much the same shape as the Land Bill ultimately presented to Parliament, and this practically gave all 'Three F.s'

<sup>1</sup> This remark is reported by Dilke in slightly different words in S. Gwynn and G. M. Tuckwell, *Life of Sir Charles W. Dilke* (hereafter cited as *Life of Dilke*) i. 365.

<sup>2</sup> On January 25, 1881.

In May Mr Dillon was arrested on suspicion. Mr Gladstone was in favour, but the Cabinet were much divided on the wisdom of the step.

On June 7, 1881, I made a speech to my constituents in the Town Hall in which I defended the retrocession of the Transvaal and the Irish policy of the Government. In the course of it I referred to Mr Bright's saying that 'force is no remedy'. I went on:

Mind that does not mean that force may not be necessary, but it is no remedy. If a man is ill, if he suffers from fever and becomes delirious, his friends may properly put a strait-waistcoat on him to prevent him from injuring himself and those around him, but if in doing this they said that they thought it to be a cure and a specific for the fever they would be thought by all of us to be out of their senses. The Government of a free country is bound to take every step—every means in its power—in order to secure obedience to the law. The law is the safeguard of the liberty of every one of us. The law is the protection of the weak against the strong, and if any class sets itself above the law, and if a Government should abet them in doing so, there would be an end of all the constitutional guarantees of our personal liberties. On the other hand, the Government is bound to do its best to alter and amend the law where it thinks it to be unjust. These are two duties of a Government which run together and cannot be separated.

Again I said :

For my part I hate Coercion. I hate the name and I hate the thing, and I am bound to say that I believe there is not one of my colleagues who does not hate it as I do, but then we hate disorder more.

I went on to say that the issue was now with the Irish people. We had brought in a Land Bill and had offered our message of peace to the Irish people and I appealed to them not to make the policy of conciliation difficult or even impossible by acts of violence, which every honest man condemned.

The Land Bill passed the House of Commons on July 28 and the House of Lords on August 16.

During the autumn accounts of outrages in Ireland filled the newspapers. Forster's expectation that he could quiet the country by the arrest of a few village ruffians proved to be absolutely unjustified, and I wrote to Dilke that I expected to hear of new proposals for fresh coercion. What was suggested was legislation to put down the Land League and I pointed out that this would raise many questions affecting public agitation and trade organizations in England. I added that I would be ready to resign rather than consent to it if there were any alternative, but Parnell had got beyond us. He was going for 'No Rent' and Separation and these could not be adopted by us as part of a Radical Programme.

On October 6, matters having got worse, Mr Gladstone made his Leeds speech in which he denounced Parnell and his followers as engaged in a course which was 'leading through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire'.<sup>1</sup> At this moment he had agreed to Forster's application to be allowed to arrest Parnell who was accordingly lodged in Kilmainham on October 13.

Again I wrote to Dilke that no other course seemed to be possible. It was better to deliver a crushing blow than to go on trying coercion by driblets or to come again to the House of Commons for further coercive legislation.

Mr Morley, who was then editing the *Pall Mall Gazette*, hesitated a good deal at the time as to the line he should adopt. At one moment he appeared to support the Government and to denounce the policy of outrage and intimidation pursued by the Parnellites. At another he deprecated coercive measures. On October 18 after one of these articles I wrote to him the following letter:

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone's speech at Leeds denouncing Parnell and his followers was on October 7, 1881; it was on this occasion that he declared that 'the resources of civilization are not yet exhausted'. The words attributed by Chamberlain to Gladstone are in fact a misquotation from the latter's speech at Knowsley Hall, near Liverpool, on October 27, 1881. The words used by Gladstone on this occasion, as reported in *The Times*, were: 'These gentlemen wish to march through rapine to the disintegration and dismemberment of the Empire.'

Private

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
October 18, 1881.

My dear Morley,

For heaven's sake do not let us 'wobble'. I say 'us' because you and I are in the same boat—you in the Press and I in the Cabinet. We arrived at our conclusions independently of the subsequent decision, and on grounds which we thought sufficient. We might have taken the line of the Democratic Federation, and ranged ourselves with Miss Helen Taylor and Mr Hyndman.<sup>1</sup> We deliberately adopted the other alternative and I for one see no cause to change my opinion.

What were the premises on which we proceeded?

1. That the avowed objects of the Irish party have developed and changed since the first formation of the Land League. The organization is no longer used to abolish practical grievances. The chief grievance against which it was directed has been recognized and removed. Now, the object is to create sentimental grievances and to influence national hatred in order to [ ]<sup>2</sup> the success of a revolutionary programme, which has for its avowed object the separation of the two countries.

2. This programme, extreme as it is, might have been advocated in a way which would not have justified the suspension of constitutional law. It has, however, largely, if not entirely, rested on a widespread system of intimidation, supported occasionally, and even frequently by actual outrage.

3. We are agreed that it is impossible to concede the present demands of the Irish party—that national independence cannot be given to Ireland. No other '*modus vivendi*' with Parnell and his associates is possible. It is, therefore, war to the knife between a despotism created to re-establish constitutional law, and a despotism not less complete elaborated to subvert law and produce anarchy as a precedent to revolutionary changes.

If this be so, what is the use of criticizing in detail the means adopted? Coercion in any form is hateful to us, but coercion with a silk glove would be ridiculous. Why are we to be shocked

<sup>1</sup> Helen Taylor was a well-known advocate of the rights of women; she and H. M. Hyndman were strong opponents of Irish coercion.

<sup>2</sup> Word omitted in all MSS.



at each new exercise of authority? As a matter of actual fact coercion is milder now than it ever has been before.

Imprisonment under the Act is a restriction of liberty without insult or cruelty. It was not so on previous occasions. Four Members of Parliament are imprisoned! Why not? With an extended franchise it is certain that every leader of revolt in Ireland can be a member of Parliament if he pleases. To say that he is not to be arrested because of his representative character is simply to say that the Executive is to be powerless and can never touch any leader of rebellion. What authority have you for asserting that the 'Castle will construe too vigorous criticism of its action as intimidation'? Certainly not, I should say, unless the criticism contains suggestions which will everywhere be interpreted by the Irish people as incentives to intimidation.

I feel strongly that the immediate necessity and duty of the moment is to support the Executive in the main lines of its policy and not to criticize details; especially as we must proceed in such a case on imperfect information. Anarchy and intimidation must be put down, order must be restored. Granted that the present state of things is temporary. But we have to deal with the present and must leave the future to take care of itself.

I am not inclined to play into the hands of the Tories—including the *Standard*, which you quote with approval, and which having hounded the Government for weeks and months past to take premature action now suggests that it may be too vigorous, and that it will probably be unavailing.

I ask myself, would any government in the world, the most democratic we know, tolerate the establishment of an organization which is intended to oust it from its place? Or would it allow, in the name of liberty the creation of a tyranny which interferes between every man and the exercise of his personal rights and legal obligations?

In thinking over the whole matter, with a view especially to Liverpool, my great difficulty is (although I believe it not insuperable) to answer the question 'Why did you not do this before?'

You would do good service to the Government if you could make a clear defence on this point. It strikes me in reference to it,

1. That the Land League has undoubtedly changed its original programme;
2. That the Land Act has altered the situation. Before it was

passed coercion might reasonably have been asserted to be used in the perpetuation of wrong and injustice: now it is used only to prevent wrong and injustice.

If the tenants of Ireland are terrorized from taking advantage of the Land Act the law must have its course; they will be evicted and ruined at the very moment when their equitable rights were for the first time made legal, and they are secured at fair rents in the possession of their holdings.

I have written fully because it is so necessary that if we are to work together we should have a complete understanding.

I wish that I were in London at this moment and could see you daily. Meanwhile I am counting on your visit on the 29th and 30th.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

J: CHAMBERLAIN

On October 25 I spoke at Liverpool in the same sense.

On December 21, in reply to a letter from the Rev. J. Page Hopps in which he put forward the Radical objections to coercion, I defended with great fullness the position of the Government and explained the change in circumstances which had made the employment of coercion absolutely necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
December 21, 1881.

Dear Sir,

In acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 19th inst., I desire to say at the outset that I have been unable to gather from its contents the reason which has led you to address to me rather than to any other politician the expression of your views on the Irish question.

At the present time the Tories are going up and down the country, and, with their accustomed habit of misrepresentation, are denouncing me for statements which I never made, and with more reason because I have declared my hatred of their favourite

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. Page Hopps of Leicester was a well-known Unitarian clergyman. Chamberlain's letter to him was published in *The Times*, December 26, 1881.

policy of Coercion and my unwillingness to resort to it while it could possibly be avoided, and without at least accompanying it by the remedial legislation which alone could remove the cause and origin of disorder. The fact that I entertain and have expressed some such opinions as these, will, I hope, suggest to you that the action to which you object, the responsibility for which I share with the other members of the Government, has not been adopted without the strongest conviction of its necessity.

You quote the effect of certain passages from my speech at Liverpool, but by omitting the context, I think you fail to give a fair representation of my meaning. I must therefore ask [*sic*] your attention to the following extracts which fully express my argument. I said, 'If this agitation had followed English precedent, if its leaders had kept it within the spirit as well as within the letter of the law, if they had discountenanced violence and intimidation, then there was never an agitation in the United Kingdom more deserving of a nation's gratitude and more entitled to complete success. But unfortunately they did not stop here. If they did not countenance, at all events they permitted and excused acts of outrage, a system of secret terrorism which no civilized Government can be expected to endure, and which would demoralize any people amongst whom it was permitted to exist. The avowed objects of the League—the examination into a system, the reform of an unjust law—were objects perfectly legal. They were objects approved by the Government, which had pledged itself to effect them if it could. But the means by which these objects were sought to be advanced—cruelty to animals, arson, outrage, even assassination—are not, in the opinion of any Liberal Ministry, permissible instruments for effecting political reform.'

I went on to say that it was on these grounds that the Government applied to Parliament in January to pass what are known as the Coercion Acts. It has been made matter of accusation against us that having obtained these exceptional powers we did not at once use them to suppress the Land League and to arrest the leaders of the agitation. But I pointed out at Liverpool that during the course of the debate Mr Gladstone and Mr Forster on more than one occasion, and without arousing any opposition from the Conservative leaders, declared that their object was to restrain the commission of actual outrage and to punish the open

instigators of intimidation but not to interfere with legitimate agitation.

You now ask what has happened since this time which has changed the policy of the Government. Surely you forget that the Land League was not suppressed—and, in fact, I doubt if it could have been legally suppressed—until the leaders issued the disgraceful 'No Rent' manifesto.<sup>1</sup> It is true that before that time some of their leaders had themselves been arrested but in the interval since the passing of the Coercion Act their connection with, and responsibility for the terrorism which prevailed could no longer be doubted. Parliament has seen fit to pass an Act giving the tenants in Ireland privileges larger and more generous than have ever been granted to them in any other country; in consequence the grievance which was the declared foundation of the agitation was in fair way of removal, and England had a right to expect that this great experiment in reconciliation should have a fair trial.

What was the course taken by Mr Parnell and his friends? Note, in passing, that they had made no secret of their intention to use the sufferings and wrongs of the Irish tenantry as an instrument in the policy of separation. It was not their interest therefore that the Irish people should be reconciled, or that the Land Act should succeed. Accordingly, Mr Parnell, who had originally recommended Griffith's valuation<sup>2</sup> as a fair rent now urged the tenants to be content with nothing higher than 'prairie value'. Here are his words, spoken at Cookstown in September during the Tyrone election, 'If the landlord is to be paid a fair rent he should not get more for the land than the value of the land before its value had been increased by the labour of the tenant. He should not get more rent for the land than its value when the Flood left it: Remember what the League has already done for you in reducing the rents, and persevere in your adherence to the principles of the League.'

On the same occasion Mr Healy M.P. said, 'What they wanted was that no landlord should be able to put a penny of rent upon a tenant, and the Land League would never cease from agitation till this question was settled on that permanent and certain basis.'

And, again, at Omagh, on September 6, Mr Parnell said, 'If

<sup>1</sup> On October 18, 1881, after the imprisonment of Parnell.

<sup>2</sup> The statutory valuation of Irish landed property.

they would carry out that programme [i.e. League programme]<sup>1</sup> and they had partially carried it out in the Bill just passed, instead of reducing the rents in Ireland from £17,000,000 to about £15,000,000, as would probably be the case under the new Act, they would reduce the rental of Ireland from £17,000,000 to about £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 a year.'

On September 15, the Land League Convention commenced its sittings in Dublin, and in the course of his speech on the 16th, Mr Parnell said, 'We only propose to test the Land Act, not to use it.'<sup>2</sup>

The effect of these speeches and declarations, as well as their intention, was unmistakable. The interpretation put upon them by the tenants was shown by the results. Rents were everywhere withheld, threats multiplied and acts of violence also. There was no longer the excuse of bad times. The harvest had been plentiful, and in many cases tenants actually boasted that they had the money for rent in their pockets.

The time had come, in my opinion, to act, and to act boldly and firmly. The whole direction of the agitation had changed, and it was now to be continued in order to intercept the benefits of remedial legislation, and to prolong and intensify feelings of irritation between the two countries. I concede to you that an agitation for the repeal of the Union might be perfectly constitutional and would not in itself justify repressive measures. But in this case the agitation rested on violence and intimidation, which, as I said at Liverpool, no Government can be expected to endure. If a constitutional struggle only was intended, and if the majority of the Irish people really favoured the objects of the leaders of the agitation, there could have been no need for the violence and terrorism which, unfortunately, have prevailed. In the earlier steps of the agitation it was possible, and even probable, that the outrages were the work of individuals and the result of private wrong; but after the passing of the Land Act this could no longer be the case. The crowds of tenants who have pressed into the Land Courts, and the remarkable fact alluded to lately by one of the Judges that recent outrages in Ireland have not been com-

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's parenthesis.

<sup>2</sup> The extracts from speeches by Parnell and Healy appear to have been supplied by John Morley, a note in whose hand-writing, preserved among the Chamberlain Papers, gives the text of all the extracts quoted.

mitted by farmers, show that this great class, at all events, is prepared to accept the message of peace which the Government have sent to them. It cannot be borne that their goodwill and liberty of action shall be overridden and made of no effect by the teachings and acts of those who have never concealed their sinister desire to make reconciliation impossible. These men used the discontent arising from unjust laws to promote their objects. So long as the grievance existed it was difficult to decide how far they were the leaders of a legitimate agitation for reform, and how far they were only the promoters of anarchy and revolution. When the grievance was removed the unavowed object was the only one remaining, and, in my opinion, it became not only justifiable but imperative to use promptly and vigorously the exceptional powers which Parliament had placed at the disposal of the Government in order to prevent the success of such object by such means.

I join in your concluding wish, and heartily hope that the time is not far distant when temporary and exceptional expedients may be dispensed with. Although the state of Ireland is still a subject of grave anxiety, it is not without hopeful signs. At this moment I am convinced that the great majority of the people would gladly settle down to the enjoyment of their new rights if they were relieved from the fear of secret violence; and it is the duty and will be the object of the Government to give them all the protection which the resources of the State can supply. In doing this I confidently rely on the support of every Liberal, as I know nothing which would be more fatal to democratic progress than an opinion, justified by facts, that Liberalism cannot defend the freedom which it is its object to establish, and is powerless to protect the majority against the anarchy and disorder which are fostered by an irreconcilable minority.

I am,

Yours truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

In the closing months of the year the state of Ireland became worse. The secret societies were more active, and violent outrages were numerous.

Forster met this state of things by wholesale arrests and at the end of the year the number of persons imprisoned on suspicion

increased to about 800. He continued at intervals to express a desire for more coercive legislation and appeared to favour the abolition of trial by jury and a Special Commission for agrarian offences. The failure of his previous anticipations had, however, somewhat shaken his influence with his colleagues.

On December 15 Mr Gladstone wrote to me that he saw no case for coercion and that abolition of trial by jury would prove to be sheer folly.

In the session of this year I introduced a Bankruptcy Bill but was unable to proceed with it owing to the press of business.

I spoke in the House of Commons on March 29 on a Resolution for the adoption of the decimal system and again on August 12 on Free Trade and the French Treaty which was then under negotiation at Paris.

#### 1882

On January 3 I delivered a speech to my constituents in the Town Hall, in which I dealt at length with the condition of Ireland, and endeavoured to separate the case of the tenants from the Fenian or Parnellite agitators by whom they were incited to the commission of outrage; and defended the Government policy of repression of outrage combined with the redress of proved grievances.

Parliament met at the beginning of February, and on the 13th I spoke on the Address, defending the Land Bill and replying to attacks which had been made on my speech at Liverpool in the preceding autumn.

I also explained and defended the delay which had taken place in the application of coercion.

At this time the situation in Ireland was of the same kind as that with which the last two years had made us familiar. Agitation was rampant everywhere. Outrages were frequent and serious; no convictions of the criminals were obtainable, and indeed the police did not know upon whom to lay their hands. Mr Forster's confident assurance that the police were acquainted with the disturbers of the peace, and that their arrest would speedily lead to the settlement of the country had proved to be altogether

illusory, and Mr Forster himself confessed, that in this respect, he had been disappointed, and that his policy had failed. He appeared to be at his wits' ends and could only suggest wholesale arrests and further coercion.

Meanwhile the Conservatives, changing their tactics, ceased to attack the Government for not having resort to coercive measures, and charged, on the contrary, that capricious and unnecessary interference with the liberty of the subject had been resorted to.

An amendment against the renewal of the Coercion Act was given notice of by Sir John Hay, while Sir Richard Cross, from the front opposition bench, also gave notice of a motion for the immediate release of the suspects imprisoned under the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

The reports which were received from Ireland showed that the Land Act required, in some particulars, extension and amendment, and Forster was engaged in preparing an Arrears Bill intended to relieve the tenants from the burden of rents due which had remained unpaid before the passing of the Land Act.

On March 24 Mr Gladstone in reply to a letter from Forster told him plainly that the renewal of the Crimes Act in its present form was impossible. In fact the feeling against it had now become extremely strong in the House and the Radicals were determined not to consent to any renewal.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, then edited by John Morley, contained frequent and severe criticisms of Forster's policy, and on April 3 published an article calling for his resignation or dismissal and suggesting the substitution of myself as Chief Secretary.

The appearance of this article created some sensation. Many of the newspapers, and notably the *Leeds Mercury* (which was then edited by Wemyss Reid, who has since written *Forster's Life*) came to the conclusion that the article was instigated by me, and Reid, who was a narrow-minded partisan, accused me of a Cabal and treachery to a colleague. As a matter of fact, the article was wholly due to Morley's own initiative, and was very much deprecated by me as I foresaw the suspicion and accusation to which it would probably lead.

It is probable that Forster himself attributed this and other



articles to my suggestion but the fact is that Morley was much more hostile to Forster's policy than I was, and my correspondence with him at this time shows constant efforts on my part to get him to support the Irish policy of the Government more thoroughly.

On April 10 Mr Parnell was released from Kilmainham on parole to visit a sick relative.<sup>1</sup> On his return he stayed with Captain O'Shea and the latter wrote to me, after the interview on April 15, a letter which was the beginning of what was subsequently known as the Kilmainham Treaty.

I had previously had no communication whatever with Captain O'Shea except the occasional interchange of a few sentences in the House of Commons. He had, however been in not infrequent communication with Mr Gladstone. (See his evidence before the Special Commission.)<sup>2</sup>

I received his letter very hopefully. It seemed to me to offer the possibility of a new departure and of an understanding with the Irish representatives which might lead to a permanent and satisfactory settlement. The Government had started with the best intentions but their efforts had been frustrated—first, by the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill in the Lords, and second, by the ill-feeling produced by the introduction of coercive legislation before the land grievances had been dealt with. I learned in subsequent communications from O'Shea that Parnell was sick of prison and in a most conciliatory frame of mind. He professed to appreciate the difficulties of the Government and to be ready now to recognize the value and importance of the Land Act. He asserted that the outrages and intimidation which were disturbing Ireland were chiefly the work of the Fenian and secret organizations. He expressed his detestation of their policy and his desire to bring whatever aid he could to the assistance of the Government in restoring peace. All, he said, that stood in his way now was the question of arrears, and if they could be satisfactorily dealt with he had no doubt that the influence of himself and his colleagues would be sufficient to secure a pacification. He hoped that, in this case, the Coercion

<sup>1</sup> In order to go to Paris to visit a sister whose son was dying.

<sup>2</sup> On October 31, 1888.

Act would be allowed to lapse, and that it would not be necessary to renew it; but if the Government had not sufficient confidence to attempt to govern Ireland without exceptional legislation, he was willing to give fair consideration to a moderate measure and would take care that nothing in the nature of obstructive discussion was interposed to its passage.

The subsequent negotiations are contained in the memorandum which follows and which was drawn up at Mr Gladstone's request for the use of the Cabinet at the time when a demand was made in the House of Commons for a Committee on these transactions. Every step in the discussion was immediately made known to Mr Gladstone and to Mr Forster, Lord Spencer, Lord Hartington and others of my colleagues. In August 1888<sup>1</sup> Mr Parnell made an attack upon me in which he insinuated that on this occasion, as also in connection with a subsequent negotiation in 1885,<sup>2</sup> I had carried on communications with the Irish Party behind the backs of my colleagues. There is not the slightest foundation for this assertion. In answer to my appeal Mr Gladstone, while agreeing that he was well acquainted with the subsequent negotiations in 1885 said that his memory did not serve him as to the transactions in 1882.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly I wrote to Sir William Harcourt and asked him to remind Mr Gladstone of the facts, especially of the memorandum which I had circulated to the Cabinet. Harcourt told me, in reply, that he perfectly recollected the Cabinet considering whether I should be authorized to continue the communications and their decision in the affirmative, Forster being present.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In fact, on July 30 and 31, 1888, in the House of Commons. The controversy was continued in *The Times*, in which a letter from Parnell was published on August 6, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> In connection with a proposed Irish 'Central Board' or 'National Council'; see Chap. vi, below.

<sup>3</sup> In the House of Commons, July 31, 1888.

<sup>4</sup> Chamberlain's letter to Harcourt is dated August 1, 1888. Harcourt appears to have given a verbal reply. The copy of Chamberlain's letter of August 1 bears a note in his own hand-writing: 'Harcourt tells me that he recollects the Cabinet considering whether I should be authorized to continue the communications with reference to Parnell's release from Kilmainham and their deciding in the affirmative, Forster being present'. See p. 159 n.

## CHAPTER II<sup>1</sup>

1882 (continued)

ON April 16 I received the following letter and enclosure from Captain O'Shea, M.P.:

*Private*

I, Albert Mansions, S.W.

April 15, 1882.

My dear Sir,

As you appear to be a Minister without political pedantry, I take the liberty of enclosing a copy of a letter which I have written to Mr Gladstone.

In managing the affairs of the Liberal party surely the error absolutely fatal must be want of pliability—I mean, of course, automatic pliability. Leaving aside other matters which are not to my present purpose, such as the effects of an extended franchise, I ask you how the Liberal party is to get in at the next election, and at the one after, and so on, against the Irish vote? And if by any chance it did get in, how on earth is it to get on?

Why is the Government in such a mess? Simply because Liberal Ministers failed to perceive the signs of the times. While they always changed what did not suit them, they thought that what suited them might always remain unchanged. And the system of ignoring Irish representatives in Irish affairs suited them exactly. In evolving the Land Bill, if the Government had made a beginning of pushing, even to some small degree, its enquiries into certain Irish quarters, what an amount of subsequent tension might have been avoided! If, later on, they had accepted my proposals, the ten millions or so (required to give effect to the suggested clause allowing the landlord a portion of such reduction

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a copy of a memorandum drawn up by Chamberlain, after notice had been given in the House of Commons on November 14, 1882, of a motion to appoint a select committee to enquire into the negotiations that led to the release of Parnell and his fellow 'suspects' from Kilmainham.

on the rent *bona fide* received by him for 15 or 20 years, as might be agreed upon between himself and his tenants out of court, within six months of the passing of the Act) would have been a very small fine on the country for the previous want of tact in its chosen advisers. I have myself good reason to dislike the Land League, because it has touched me in the vital part, the pocket. But in my little way I have sufficient *nous* to compromise with the inevitable. I lose, but not so much as I might.

There is no use in bewailings, scoldings, and perorations. You have to deal with men and things as they are and although time and many hateful incidents have aggravated the difficulties, still I believe that it might be to the advantage of the Liberal party if its leaders were to try to compromise honourably, and that such an effort might be met by the most influential Irishman of the day in a candid and moderate spirit.

This letter and enclosure are of course confidential.

I am,

Yours very faithfully,  
W. H. O'SHEA

The Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.

[*Enclosure*]<sup>1</sup>

*Private*

I, Albert Mansions, S.W.

April 13, 1882.

My dear Sir,

At the risk of appearing importunate, I reply to your letter of the 11th.

<sup>1</sup> This version of O'Shea's letter to Gladstone of April 13, 1882, was not included in Chamberlain's copy of this memorandum, probably through an oversight on the part of his secretary; Chamberlain's reference to 'letter and enclosure' makes it clear that he intended the letter to be included; the copy, the text of which is here printed, has at some period been pinned to the MS. of the memorandum, in the margin of which is written 'copy annexed', opposite the first paragraph of O'Shea's letter of April 15, 1882. It is in the hand-writing of Chamberlain's secretary, and was presumably made when O'Shea's own copy was sent back to him, in compliance with his request to 'return me the draft of my letter to Mr Gladstone as I have not kept another copy'. (O'Shea to Chamberlain, April 18, 1882.) The version that O'Shea sent to Chamberlain appears to have been a first draft; the fair copy sent to Gladstone (Add. MSS. 44269, ff. 18-25) differs in wording, although not in sense, from the version in the Chamberlain Papers.

I did not mean to convey to you that the plan which I proposed to you in June could be adapted to present circumstances. But I assert that if you had agreed to it, there would have been no Land League Convention, the Court would not have been blocked, the gaols would have been empty. A reasonable and unacrimonious argument for the revision of certain clauses relating to arrears, Improvements and purchase, would have had the place of present brutalities of debate, and the burthen on the Exchequer would have been light indeed compared with the immediate gain to the Empire in peace, order and goodwill.

Remember that there was no detail of my proposal to which I had not previously obtained Mr Parnell's assent, and that I had the right to give you, and did give you, the assurance that on the easy terms indicated, the agrarian agitation would be immediately brought to a close.

At the eleventh hour and even under the aggravated circumstances I believe that the pacification of Ireland is by no means so difficult as it appears to be. But you must pay for it and you must cease to ignore an important Irishman.

On Monday Mr Parnell as you are aware in avoiding a crowd waiting for him at Euston Square was unable to catch the mail-train for Paris. He left Mr McCarthy and the others (with whom he had conversed with great reticence) as early as possible. As there was no object to be gained by his arriving in Paris in the evening and as he was anxious to speak with me, he spent Tuesday partly at my house at Eltham and partly here—whence he was able, eluding the scouts and reporters, to enter the 8 o'clock train at the last moment at Victoria Station. The reason why I trouble you with what would otherwise be the merest trifles will, I believe, be clear. The person to whom Mr Parnell addresses himself in many cases (much as I differ from him in serious matters of politics and policy) is myself. He considers, I believe, that I am not without insight into Irish affairs, necessities and possibilities and he knows that no member of Parliament has nearly so much influence with the clergy of the county which that member represents as I have attained. Eighteen months ago he used every effort to induce me to take over the leadership of the party. I mention these things (the last one is known only to two or three besides ourselves) as an explanation of what would otherwise appear to be fatuous officiousness.

By the use of this influence I brought Mr Parnell within the sphere of moderate counsels in June. The day before yesterday he observed that the Government must regret having refused my offer. Your letter of the 11th proves this to be a mistake.

However I will try to mediate again. This time of course Mr Parnell has no part in the initiative.

The primary questions are these. Have the Government yet discovered that Mr Parnell is a personage exercising immense power in Ireland, and considerable influence in England?

Do they believe that the forces behind him would mutiny if he were to command them moderation?

If the answer to the first be Yes, and to the second No, it is evident that you would do well to listen to me, because what I was able to do before, I might be able to do again.

In consideration of certain amendments to the Land Act, frankly and quickly admitted by the Government, and of some understanding as to other matters which would be only the acknowledgment of the inevitable I believe that a return would be made advantageous in the higher sense to the country, and in the lower sense to the Government.

1. I believe that moral support of great power might be enlisted to aid you actively against agrarian outrage, and that effectual steps might be taken to hasten the acquiescence of all the tenants in the spirit of the Land Act.

2. That the passage of your resolutions on Procedure might henceforth not be virulently or persistently opposed.

These things, if the Government, on its side, were prepared to deal in a manner not yet hinted at by them with arrears of rents.

Here you must give not lend. Mr Bright asked me the other day how you were to distinguish between the tenants who can, and those who cannot pay. No inquisition is possible; any attempt to throw further business on the Land Court would clearly be a fatal folly. The only limitation should be the £30 valuation, and this could be adhered to. But the proportion falling on the State (considerably less, I apprehend, than the sum mentioned by Mr O'Donnell to-day in *The Times*) must be a grant, not a loan. The land must be left free of charge. Otherwise you will never hear the end of it, and far better leave landlords and tenants to fight it out at once than to carry on a running fire for years.

I cannot ask you to bear with me on the details of the questions arising out of *Adams v. Dunseath*.

The only way to deal with the purchase clauses, the establishment of a peasant proprietary, about which so many members of the Government used to blow so hot and last session blew so cold is clear enough now. Either you must carry the measure out to the full or the Tories will. Herein lies part of the audacity of which I took the liberty to speak in my last note. Take the wind out of their sails. Mr Bright's name stares you in the face followed by columns and columns of *The Times* proclaiming the safety of peasant proprietary in its fullest development. As for doubt now, the Government must hope out of the nettle danger to pluck the flower safety. There is an argument in favour of the delay which has taken place and in mitigation of the danger. I heard you last year express a hope—perhaps amounting to a belief—that under the action of the Land Act, the general value of land in Ireland might rise from 20 to 22 years, to 30, 35 years purchase of the rental. As, on the contrary, it has fallen into the tens, the annual repayments ought to be much easier to the purchaser and consequently more secure to the State or its intermediary Land Bank—for I hope there will be some intermediary.

It is no doubt needless to say that the Judicial rent ought to date from the gale immediately succeeding the application to the Court. The delay until after the decision is one of the most fertile causes of unwillingness on the part of landlords to settle immediately outside the Court.

In correspondence with you last year, I believe, but certainly in advocating the extension of the Act to *all* leaseholders who should desire to come within its provisions, I alluded, while carefully refraining from publicly mentioning the name of the owner, to Mrs Moroney's estate at Miltown, Malbay, Clare. Owing to her tenants' (to whom the most oppressive leases were given by her late husband) being excluded from the benefit of the Act or from any hope of it, the place has for many months been in a woeful state. A horrible murder has taken place, there has been much boycotting and a razzia by Mr Clifford Lloyd on guilty and innocent, for both are fish to his net. The percentage of suspects imprisoned from that little place, to the number of inhabitants, is appalling.

The labourers would be satisfied for the present, with a Royal

Commission, but in passing I may as well say that the sooner Union is substituted for Electoral Division rating, the better for this wretched class.

It may surprise you that I should not say much about the imprisonment of the suspects or about the bureaucracy which is called "The Castle", and of which Mr Forster, as usual, has been the victim. The two subjects hang very much together, and I regret to say that I am as sure as of the present writing, of the innocence of several who are or have been in gaol. I can be very moderate on the subject and I merely say that if the Government were to decide on a satisfactory amending Bill, and were to be shown that it would be loyally accepted, surely the reconciliation would be speedily sealed by an amnesty.

I believe that you yourself see the necessity of a considerable measure of local or self-government, before long, and I believe that the logic of events has amply proved that Irishmen must in the future be more largely consulted and employed in administrative Government.

Regretting that I should have had to trouble you with so long a letter,

I remain,

Yours very faithfully,  
W. H. O'SHEA

The Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.

I replied :

*Private*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
April 17, 1882.

My dear Sir,

I am really very much obliged to you for your letter and especially for the copy of your very important and interesting communication to Mr Gladstone.

I am not in a position, as you will readily understand, to write you fully on the subject. I have no authority to commit my colleagues and I am bound to some extent to reserve my personal opinions; but I think I may say that there appears to me nothing in your proposals which does not deserve consideration and which might not be the basis of a subsequent agreement.

I entirely concur in your view that it is the interest and the duty



of the Government to lose no opportunity of acquainting themselves with representative opinion in Ireland, and for that purpose that we ought to welcome suggestion and criticism from every quarter and from all sections and classes of Irishmen provided that they are animated by a desire for good government and not by a blind hatred of all government whatsoever.

There is one thing you must bear in mind and that is that if the Government, and the Liberal party generally, are bound to show greater consideration than they have hitherto done for Irish opinion, on the other hand the leaders of the Irish party must pay some attention to public opinion in England and Scotland. Ministers are only able to work through the instruments at their disposal. They cannot move much quicker or much in advance of those behind them, and English public opinion has to be educated quite as much as or more than English statesmen. Since the present Government have been in office they have not had the slightest assistance in this direction. On the contrary the Irish members have acted as if their object were to disgust, embitter and prejudice all English opinion against the cause to which they have pledged themselves. The result is that nothing would be easier at the present moment than to get up in every large town an anti-Irish agitation almost as formidable as the anti-Jewish agitation in Russia. I fail to see how Irishmen or Ireland profit by such a policy as this, and I shall rejoice whenever the time comes that a more conciliatory spirit is manifested on both sides.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Captain W. H. O'Shea, M.P.

On the 18th I received :

*Private*

1, Albert Mansions, S.W.

April 18, 1882.

My dear Sir,

I am in complete accord with you as to the duties of Irish representatives and the misfortune of the courses adopted by some of them. There must, however, be exaggerations in agitation.

I perfectly understand your reticences. At the same time what the French call the psychological moment ought not to be lost.

I have heard from Mr Parnell this morning. He says in confidence that he hopes 'something may come out of the correspondence and certainly the prospect looks favourable'.

I propose with your permission to send him your letter. If I am not to do so, send me a line to that effect to the House of Commons by 5 o'clock. It is of course understood that so far as I am concerned all knowledge of the present correspondence is confined to Mr Gladstone, Mr Parnell, you and myself. Mr Parnell will be with me at the end of the week.

If not too much trouble, please return me the draft of my letter to Mr Gladstone as I have not kept another copy.

I remain,

Yours truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

The Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P. ,

I answered from the Board of Trade assenting to Captain O'Shea's request that he should show my previous letter to Mr Parnell, but kept no copy of this note.

I wrote on the 17th or 18th<sup>1</sup> to Mr Gladstone to say that in my opinion an opportunity had occurred for a conciliatory policy. Mr Parnell appeared to be in a reasonable mood; Mr Healy's Bill<sup>2</sup> was a sign of a change of policy on the part of the extreme men since it proposed to assist the working of the Land Act and not to make it impossible: that I had hitherto refrained from speaking to any of this section for fear of embarrassing Mr Forster, but if desired I would see Messrs Healy, O'Shea and others, without committing the Government, and would find out in what humour they were, whether willing to join in securing good government for Ireland or determined to make all Government impossible: that in my opinion we had always

<sup>1</sup> April 18, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> An allusion to the bill designed to extend the benefits of the 1881 Land Act to tenants whose rent was in arrears and to those whose leases dated from before 1870. The bill was actually introduced by John Redmond, who had been fortunate in the private members' ballot; T. M. Healy was only one of its sponsors; it had been drafted by Maurice Healy. (T. M. Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day*, i. 152-5.)

made a mistake in not consulting the men of the extreme party, who after all represent the majority of the Irish nation and might have been committed, in part at all events, to our policy if they had had any part whatever in the discussion which preceded its settlement. I enquired whether Mr Forster might not tell Mr Parnell that he might have an extension of his parole on the same terms.

Mr Gladstone replied as follows:

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.  
April 19, 1882.

My dear Chamberlain,

I will send your letter to Forster. With you I attach importance to the fact that the extreme men are introducing a Bill to amend the Land Act. It may be a question whether they could go further except upon some movement from us towards meeting their overture.

Yours sincerely,  
W. E. GLADSTONE

Subsequently I saw Mr Forster, who authorized me to tell Captain O'Shea that Mr Parnell's parole might be extended, if he wished it, and either on the ground of his indisposition or of his desire to be with his sister who had just lost her son. I met Captain O'Shea at the House of Commons on the 21st and informed him of this offer and the same evening I received his reply:

Eltham.  
April 21.

My dear Sir,

As I anticipated, Mr Parnell, while fully appreciating your kindness in the matter, cannot ask for an extension of his parole. He feels better and will present himself in due course at Kilmainham.

Reserving the hope of being able to co-operate in some rational adjustment of the difficulties.

I remain,

Yours very truly,  
W. H. O'SHEA

On Saturday, April 2<sup>1</sup>, at the Cabinet the letter of Captain O'Shea to Mr Gladstone and his communication to me were discussed in connection with the evidence of a change of feeling afforded by Mr O'Donnell's letter in *The Times*<sup>1</sup> and the production of Redmond and Healy's Bill for the amendment of the Land Act. I again offered to communicate on my own responsibility with Captain O'Shea and other Irish members and to ascertain their views but distinctly without authority to negotiate or to do more than receive any information they might tender.

On the same evening and in consequence of my request Mr O'Shea called on me at Prince's Gate<sup>2</sup> and we had a long conversation. He told me that Mr Parnell was staying with him and that he (Captain O'Shea) was fully acquainted with his views. He repudiated, on behalf of Mr Parnell, any desire to bargain with the Government and above all to stipulate directly or indirectly for his own release. He said that Mr Parnell's view was that the arrears were the chief cause of eviction and eviction the chief cause of the outrages which unhappily continued, and that if the Government could see their way to deal with this question effectually that the state of the country would certainly improve and that the members of the Irish National party would be enabled to co-operate heartily with the Government in their endeavour to secure the pacification of the country and the restoration of law and order.

In Captain O'Shea's presence I wrote down the following memorandum as representing my understanding of what he wished to be conveyed to the Government as Mr Parnell's opinion:

### *Memorandum*

72, Prince's Gate, S.W.

If the Government announce a satisfactory plan of dealing with arrears, Mr Parnell will advise all tenants to pay rents and will

<sup>1</sup> A letter on the arrears problem from F. H. O'Donnell, the Irish M.P., in *The Times*, April 13, 1882. It is mentioned in O'Shea's letter to Gladstone, April 13, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain's London house at this time was 72 Prince's Gate. In 1883 he moved to 40 Prince's Gardens.

denounce outrages, resistance to law and all processes of intimidation whether by Boycotting or in any other way.

No plan of dealing with arrears will be satisfactory which does not wipe them off compulsorily by a composition—one-third payable by tenant, one-third by the State—from the Church Fund or some other source—and one-third remitted by the landlord, but so that the contribution by the tenant and the State shall not exceed one year's rent each—the balance, if any, to be remitted by the landlord.

Arrears to be defined as arrears accruing up to May 1, 1881.

April 23. On Sunday morning Captain O'Shea called upon me again with the enclosed letters:

1, Albert Mansions, S.W.

April 23, 1882.

My dear Sir,

I have put Mr Parnell in full possession of our interview of yesterday.

At that interview I informed you that in Mr Parnell's opinion no settlement is possible unless the proportion of the arrears payable by the State be a grant and not a loan.

The proportions in the Memorandum (of which I enclose a copy) appear to Mr Parnell to be just. At the same time he considers that an alteration of detail ought to be introduced so as to give tenants who have made payments on account the full benefit of the composition. He adds that the date ought to be extended to November 1, 1881.

Mr Parnell is prepared in case of such an arrangement of the question of arrears to use his best exertions to stop outrages, the circulation or support of no-rent manifestoes, and intimidation generally.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

The Right Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.

1, Albert Mansions, S.W.

April 23, 1882.

My dear Sir,

On a separate sheet I have particularly answered the points contained in the memorandum.

In case of agreement Mr Parnell will loyally use his utmost efforts to abolish agrarian outrages and intimidation. He believes that he could use means more effectual than a manifesto. In the improbable contingency of his expectation on this point being unfulfilled, however, he would issue such an appeal.

While Mr Parnell does not wish to urge the question of his own release, he mentions that any doubt whatever of *immediate* pacification would be removed were Davitt and he at liberty, for the former would certainly, under the circumstances lend the full weight of his influence to Mr Parnell's action. At present Brennan falsely assumes a general Power of Attorney to speak, write and sign for Davitt, and it would be most important that this unscrupulous agency should be eliminated.

If the country should not settle down as clearly and quickly as Mr Parnell is confident would be the case, I have reason to believe that he would *ipso facto* be brought to see the necessity of not offering an embittered opposition to the passage of temporary provisions aimed at individuals and localities tainted with crime.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

The Right Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.

April 23. I communicated the result of my conversation at once to Mr Forster upon whom I called at his house in Eccleston Square.

Mr Forster expressed the opinion that the results were hopeful, but he thought the particular settlement of the arrears question suggested was open to serious objections. I pointed out to him that the details could no doubt be altered but the fundamental points were that the settlement should be by gift and not by loan, and compulsorily enforced.

I afterwards saw Mr Bright and Sir William Harcourt.

On Monday April 24 I received from Mr Forster a letter:

80, Eccleston Square, S.W.

April 23, 1882.

Dear Chamberlain,

I send you comparison of the three plans, Healy's, Parnell's and my own, which please return.

If Mr Gladstone assents to May in place of November and if Healy be reasonable, he would accept my plan so altered, but I do not think either gift or compulsion are possible.

As regards condition of release of Parnell and Co, what we want is not their promise to try to prevent outrages, but an assurance by which they will be bound in honour before the public,—that is an undertaking that they will not themselves renew an agitation to replace the law of the land by their law, or to prevent men from the fulfilment of their contracts, or in any way by boycotting or otherwise, to intimidate them from the free enjoyment of their rights.

If we release them without getting the Country quiet—or a fresh Act—or such assurance, I believe we should make matters worse in Ireland, and be probably turned out ourselves by an indignant House and Country, as would be our desert.

Yours truly,

W. E. FORSTER

At the levee (April 24) I informed Lord Spencer of the result, and in the evening at the House of Commons Lord Hartington.

On the same evening I had a long conversation with Healy who was introduced to me by Captain O'Shea. I did not refer to the information I had received of Mr Parnell's opinions or to my previous conversation with Captain O'Shea, but sought to gather Mr Healy's individual opinions on the questions at issue.

Later in the evening Mr Justin McCarthy sent to me from the back of the Speaker's Chair and asked for a few minutes' conversation.

He stated that Parnell was much concerned at the recent terrible outrages and desired to see an improvement in the state of the country, which was getting from bad to worse. He feared the interference of Ribbonmen unless some early approach was made to a settlement.

The main difficulties in the way of settlement were the arrears and leases question. If these could be satisfactorily settled—especially arrears—the Land agitation would simmer down and disappear and Parnell would gladly do all in his power to prevent outrage and intimidation.

I said I was obliged for information but of course could make no statement in reply.

On the afternoon of the 24th, Captain O'Shea had called on me at the Board of Trade and in the course of a very short conversation I pointed out the difficulty of proceeding further in the matter or of giving the slightest colour to the cry that might be raised of a bargain between the Government and the members of the Land League.

On Tuesday morning I received a letter:

1, Albert Mansions, S.W.

April 24, 1882.

My dear Sir,

As I understand your observations this afternoon the following is the course for the adoption of which we should strive.

If the Government should see their way to deal with the arrears in the general manner indicated in my previous communications, a statement of policy would be made in the House. This would embrace

No. 1. The above settlement of arrears.

No. 2. The full extension of the purchase clauses.

No. 3. The other amendments to the Land Act (as yet undiscussed by us but which ought to present no great difficulty if No. 1 were adopted by the Government).

No. 4. The non-renewal of 44 Vic. cap. 4.<sup>1</sup>

No. 5. A Royal Commission on the Labourers.

No. 6. The outline of the Bill in substitution of 44 Vic. cap. 4.

On this statement being made, a spokesman of the Parnellites should welcome the policy enunciated in Nos. 1 to 5, and promise their support to what appears to them to promise the settlement of every just claim of the Irish peasantry. With regard to No. 6, he might say that they believe outrages must cease now that the incentive is about to be altogether removed, but that while they reserve their opinion as to details as matters of candid and fair debate, they acknowledge that the paramount interest of the country at large may require some temporary and exceptional provisions of law affecting proclaimed districts.

<sup>1</sup> Forster's Coercion Act.



Mr Parnell should be induced to give expression to his views as to the absolute necessity of an organized struggle by every true friend of the Irish people against outrage and intimidation.

We both recognize the necessity of this action of his taking such a shape as to preclude any hostile cry of its being inspired by any bargain or condition as to his own release, etc.

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

The Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.

I replied as follows :

House of Commons.

April 25, 1882.

My dear Sir,

When you are next in town I shall be glad to see you if you will let me know by wire, or write beforehand, but I do not think there is any reason at present to bring you up specially.

You will see that the debate on Healy's Bill to-morrow will probably throw some light on the main question discussed by us viz. that of arrears. It would be impossible, however, to make so extended and definite a statement as is suggested in your note of this morning.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Captain W. H. O'Shea, M.P.

I saw Captain O'Shea afterwards at the House of Commons when I told him that this letter appeared to extend very considerably the subjects for settlement and was inconsistent with his previous statement that the settlement of the arrears was the only obstacle to the pacification of the country.

In reply I received this letter:

House of Commons.

April 26, 1882.

My dear Sir,

I think it is best not to lose any time in putting what I have just said to you in writing.

My note of the 24th was in no way intended to spring any fresh

demand on you. It was merely a memorandum of all the matters we had touched on in various conversations, and referred especially to possible assistance to you in arrangements about the Bill which at a future date is to be introduced in substitution of the Protection to Person and Property Act. But I had no intention of enlarging the immediate matter of our communications and this is solely the question of arrears. In fact, I am not sure that I have any authority at present to go beyond the subjects in the Land Act.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

The Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.

I saw Mr Gladstone on Tuesday, April 25, and communicated to him the result of my interviews with Captain O'Shea and Mr McCarthy and Mr Healy, and subsequently informed the other members of the Cabinet at a meeting which was held in Mr Gladstone's room on Tuesday afternoon.

The Cabinet decided to meet the proposal for the second reading of Mr Redmond's Bill in the terms of the statement subsequently made by the Prime Minister on Wednesday afternoon and to wait and see how this statement was received with the Irish party.

On Tuesday evening I spoke to Mr Dickson the member for Tyrone who had told Mr Forster that there were reports of negotiations with the Irish party. In answer to my enquiries he said that his information came from Mr Shaw who had told him that he was sure that I had seen Mr McCarthy. I told Mr Dickson exactly what had passed between Mr McCarthy and myself and he expressed his great satisfaction at the result.

On Wednesday<sup>1</sup> after Mr Gladstone's statement a reply in conciliatory terms was made by Mr Healy and one still more favourable by Mr Sexton.

On April 28 I had an interview with Mr O'Shea and suggested that the tone of the debate on Wednesday afforded an opportunity to Mr Parnell to give some public expression to the senti-

<sup>1</sup> April 26, 1882.

ments which he had expressed to Mr McCarthy and which Mr McCarthy had repeated to me.

Captain O'Shea reaffirmed the accuracy of the statement as to Mr Parnell's sentiments but said the difficulty was that Mr Parnell could not do or say anything which might seem to be with a view to his own release.

At the same time he considered that the conciliatory action of the Government in reference to arrears ought to be met by some corresponding advance on the part of the extreme Irish party.

O'Shea asked if Mr Gladstone intended to deal with leases. I said as at present advised No, but of course if arrears were settled and the country quieted this and all other questions affecting working of Land Act would be proper subjects of Parliamentary discussion and the Government would endeavour to approach their consideration in an impartial spirit.

On Friday morning I received the following from Mr McCarthy:

House of Commons.

Thursday.

Dear Chamberlain,

Can you spare me a few minutes some time this evening? I wish to read a letter to you which I have just received.

Faithfully yours,

JUSTIN MCCARTHY

He subsequently read to me portions of a letter received by him from Mr Parnell. He promised to send me copy of this extract, and did so accordingly covering it with the following letter:

House of Commons.

April 28 [1882].

Dear Chamberlain,

I enclose a copy of the letter. I leave it to your discretion to show it to anyone to whom you think it would be of advantage to have it shown—only stipulating, what indeed it is hardly necessary to stipulate, that it is not shown to anyone who would be likely to put it into print.

Whatever comes of it accept my cordial thanks and believe me.

Faithfully yours,  
JUSTIN MCCARTHY

*Extract*

We think in the first place that no time should be lost in endeavouring to obtain a satisfactory settlement of the arrears question and that the solution proposed in the Bill standing for second reading to-morrow (Wednesday) would provide a satisfactory solution, though the Church Fund would have to be supplemented by a grant from Imperial resources of probably a million or so.

Next as regards the permanent amendment of the Land Act we consider that the rent-fixing clauses should be extended to as great an extent as is possible, having in view the necessity of passing an Amendment Bill through the House of Lords, that Leaseholders who have taken leases either before or since the Act of 1870 should be permitted to apply to have a fair rent fixed, and that the purchase clauses should be amended as suggested by the Bill the second reading of which will be moved by Mr Redmond to-morrow.

If the Government were to announce their intention of proposing a satisfactory settlement of the arrears difficulty as indicated above, we on our part would make it known that the No-Rent manifesto was withdrawn, and we should advise the tenants to settle with their landlords. We should also then be in a much better position than we were ever before to make our exertions effective to put a stop to the outrages which are unhappily so prevalent.

If the result of the arrears settlement and the further ameliorative measures suggested above were the material diminution of outrage before the end of the session and the prospect of the return of the Country after a time to something like a normal condition, we should hope that the Government would allow the Coercion Act to lapse and govern the country by the same laws as in England.

I replied :

April 30 [1882].

My dear McCarthy,

Many thanks for your note with the extract from Mr Parnell's letter. I will endeavour to make good use of it. I only wish it *could* be published, for the knowledge that the questions still under discussion will be treated in this conciliatory spirit would have a great effect on public opinion.

You may rely on me at all times to do my best to help forward the solution of the Irish problem and in spite of past failure and past mistakes I am still hopeful for the future.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Mr McCarthy's communication, with the one which follows from Mr Dickson, I forwarded to Mr Gladstone.

*Private*

Reform Club,  
Pall Mall, S.W.

Friday night.

Dear Mr Chamberlain,

Sorry I missed seeing you. I only wished to express my deep anxiety as to the present position of Irish affairs. Another crisis is at hand, and upon the result of Mr Gladstone's statement Tuesday next depends the peace and prospects of Ireland for many months to come. The Irish party as you are aware are ready for a new departure. The Land question is played out. Tenants are tired and anxious for rest. The League funds running down and *America* not responding. You no doubt know all these facts as well as I do.

A bold step now on the part of the Government would be attended in Ireland with the best results, and I trust and hope that the resignation of Lord Cooper [*sic*] and appointment of Lord Spencer is a hopeful sign. I told Mr Forster my opinion as to the *immediate* release of Parnell and other M.P.s, to be followed quickly by all (except criminals); there would I believe be an immediate withdrawal of the 'No-Rent' manifesto. All this followed by the Government proposals for dealing with arrears of rent would show to the people that the Government had decided to try the country before expiration of present Acts. And

if peace did not follow we would assist the Government in passing very effective measures.

Excuse my troubling you at such length.

Yours very sincerely,

THOMAS A. DICKSON

[PS.] I had a conversation with Mr Forster at 4 o'clock Irish Office but did not know then what was in *Evening Standard* as to Lord Spencer's succeeding Lord Cooper [*sic*]. Had Mr Forster given me a hint the result would have been that Heneage's<sup>1</sup> motion would not have been made.<sup>2</sup>

On Friday<sup>3</sup> night Mr Forster spoke to me in the House of Commons and told me that O'Shea had asked permission to visit Parnell in Kilmainham. He added that if Mr Parnell were going to make any declaration it was of great importance that it should be done before the debate on Sir John Hay's motion<sup>4</sup> next Tuesday.

On Monday<sup>5</sup> morning I received from Captain O'Shea a letter covering a letter from Mr Parnell, copy of which was also sent to Mr Forster and by him forwarded to Mr Gladstone.

House of Commons.

May 1 [1882].

My dear Sir,

Observe that the engagement to stop outrage and intimidation follows, and is dependent on, the settlement of the arrears question only. The reference to leases is distinctly in regard to 'permanent remedial legislation'. It strikes me that if there is no other way of forcing McCarthy's hand I might tell him that unless he agrees to use the authority which Parnell gave him in the letter—viz. to make the contents public, which is the clear meaning of the ex-

<sup>1</sup> Edward Heneage (later Lord Heneage); a Liberal M.P. and in 1886 a Liberal Unionist. His motion, notice of which was given on April 28, 1882, was for the abolition of the Irish Viceroyalty and its replacement by a Secretaryship of State.

<sup>2</sup> Dickson's punctuation and capitalization were very idiosyncratic. A few corrections have been made in order to render the letter intelligible.

<sup>3</sup> 'April 28.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)

<sup>4</sup> Against the renewal of coercion.

<sup>5</sup> 'May 1.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)



*Elliott and Fry*

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

1809-98

From a photograph taken at Hawarden in 1887



*Picture Post Library*

CHARLES STEWART PARNELL

1846-91



pression in that respect by a statement after Mr Gladstone's, I shall declare my knowledge of its being in his possession and ask him to produce it in the House.

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

The Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.

*Private and Confidential*

Kilmainham.

April 28, 1882.

My dear O'Shea,

I was very sorry that you had left Albert Mansions before I reached London from Eltham as I had wished to tell you that after our conversation I had made up my mind that it would be proper for me to put Mr McCarthy in possession of the views which I had previously communicated to you.

I desire to impress upon you the absolute necessity of a settlement of the arrears which shall leave no recurring sore connected with them behind, and which shall enable us to show the smaller tenantry that they have been treated with justice and some generosity.

The proposal you have described to me as suggested to me in some quarters, of making a loan (over however many years the repayment might be spread) should be absolutely rejected for reasons which I have fully explained to you. If the arrears question be settled upon the lines indicated by us, I have every confidence—a confidence shared by my colleagues—that the exertions which we should be able to make strenuously and unremittingly would be effective in stopping outrages and intimidation of all kinds.

As regards permanent legislation of an ameliorative character I may say that the views which you have always shared with me as to the admission of leaseholders to the Fair Rent clauses of the Act are more confirmed than ever. So long as the flower of the Irish peasantry are kept outside the Act there cannot be the permanent settlement of the Land Question which we all so much desire.

I should also strongly hope that some compromise might be arrived at this Session with regard to the amendment of the tenure clauses.

It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon the enormous advantage

to be derived from the full extension of the purchase clauses, which now seems practically to have been adopted by all parties.

The accomplishment of the programme I have sketched out to you would in my judgment be regarded by the country as a practical settlement of the Land Question and would enable us to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal Party in forwarding Liberal principles and measures of general reform. And I believe that the Government at the end of this Session would from the state of the country find themselves thoroughly justified in dispensing with further coercive measures.

Yours very truly,

C. S. PARNELL

On May 1 (Monday) at the Cabinet it was decided to release the three Parliamentary suspects' immediately and without conditions, the Government being of opinion that the statements made as to their present temper and views showed that their release would not be a source of public danger.

Mr Forster disputed and resigned.

## CHAPTER III

1882 (continued)

ON April 20 I learned at Windsor, where we had gone for a Council, that Lord Spencer had been appointed, or was to be appointed, Lord-Lieutenant in place of Lord Cowper who had resigned.

On the 21st Dilke and I discussed the situation and decided that we would not agree to any proposal to renew the Suspension Act.<sup>1</sup>

On the same day Mr Forster circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet with suggestions for further legislation. I sent round immediately the following memorandum in reply. In this I again pressed my suggestion for state assistance for public works, and urged that a scientific and technical Commission should be at once appointed to report on the subject:

### *[Memorandum]*

I have read carefully Mr Forster's memorandum. I am unable to gather from it the precise nature of the proposals which he would recommend for adoption at the present time. With regard, for instance, to the all-important question of the renewal of the Coercion Act, I find that he suggests alternative courses, and while he says that he would prefer the renewal of the Act for a year, he points out that there may be strong parliamentary objections which would make it desirable to allow it to expire on September 30. No one is better able than Mr Forster to gauge the exact importance of these parliamentary difficulties, and I should have been glad to know at what definite conclusions he has arrived after consideration of all aspects of the subject. The same observation applies in less degree to other suggestions in the memorandum, as for instance to the proposals to extend the

<sup>1</sup> The Act of 1881 suspending Habeas Corpus.

powers of search and to revive a curfew clause. I gather that in reference to this and other questions Mr Forster has hitherto only consulted the resident magistrates and other official authorities, and that he has not conferred with any of the representatives of the Irish people. I think it would be most desirable to invite the opinion of men like Mr Shaw, Mr Charles Russell, Mr Givan, and Captain O'Shea, and Mr O'Connor Power, who are all friendly to the Government and anxious and willing to assist the Executive in maintaining law and order.

I have a strong conviction that it would be expedient to go further and to approach some of the leaders of the extreme party, especially Mr Healy and Mr Sexton, who have I think recently shown a desire to come back to a more moderate policy and to abandon the resistance to all government and authority which is the keynote of the 'No Rent' manifesto.

In this connection the Bill introduced by Mr Healy for amending the Land Act is deserving of the most serious consideration. Its avowed object is to improve the Act and not to destroy it; to amend it and to assist its working. Speaking generally its proposals are not unreasonable and afford a basis for agreement, and if they were in principle adopted Mr Healy and all who follow him would be of necessity committed to the Land Act in the successful operation of which they would have a joint interest in future with the Government.

The letter of Mr O'Donnell in *The Times* with regard to arrears, and the assurance given by Mr O'Shea with regard to the opinion entertained by Mr Parnell are all confirming evidence of a disposition on the part of those who have been the leaders of the Land League and of the agitation against the Government and the Land Act to make a new departure and to accept this measure, with amendments admitted to be necessary, as a settlement of the present stage of the Land Question. If these men could be enlisted on the side of law and order, and would sincerely denounce the outrages which have disgraced their country, the task of the Government would be brought within reasonable limits. I cannot see any danger in such an interchange of opinion as I suggest. We have nothing to conceal and I do not propose that we should make any bargain. Nothing will induce us to swerve from our determination to put down outrage by every means which may be necessary or adequate for the purpose. On the other hand I

hope nothing will lessen our desire to remedy every proved grievance. We cannot lose anything by asking for and obtaining information from every source. If the complaints which Irish representatives may have to make are well founded it would be our wish and our duty to deal with them. If we think them unreasonable or if they are raised only to embarrass the Government and to make more difficult the action of the Executive we shall be able to disregard them. I think it probable that some of those with whom we have to deal are really irreconcilable; but even then it would be a distinct advantage to establish this clearly and to separate them from others of their party who may be more reasonable and more truly patriotic.

I proceed to consider the chief points to which it appears that the attention of the Government must be immediately directed.

1. As to the renewal of the Coercion Act. I have found a widespread objection to such a proposal. Men as different in their general view as Mr Goschen, Mr Broadhurst, Mr Shaw Lefevre, Mr R. N. Phillips, and Mr Collings have all within the last few days expressed to me their decided objection to such a course. I do not suppose it would be impossible to renew the Bill with the help of the Tory party, but I am certain that it would hopelessly divide the Liberals both in the House and in the country. If it is decided not to renew it I hope it may be found possible to release the whole of the suspects, except those accused of actual participation in outrage, at some not very distant date and before the expiry of the Act. There is some appearance both of weakness and of a grudging spirit in keeping men in to the last moment and letting them out only because of the political difficulty of renewing the legislation under which they are imprisoned. I am afraid the state of the country does not offer sufficient excuse for an amnesty, but some other might be found.

2. I agree with Mr Forster that some substitute for the Coercion Act must be found, and I also agree with him that there would be no objection to re-enact the compensation clauses of the Peace Preservation Act of 1870.

The proposal to re-enact some form of the curfew clause also deserves consideration and would not be seriously objected to; but it is altogether different with regard to the proposal to increase the power of search. This power is said to have been abominably misused in past times and the opposition to it would

powers of search and to revive a curfew clause. I gather that in reference to this and other questions Mr Forster has hitherto only consulted the resident magistrates and other official authorities, and that he has not conferred with any of the representatives of the Irish people. I think it would be most desirable to invite the opinion of men like Mr Shaw, Mr Charles Russell, Mr Givan, and Captain O'Shea, and Mr O'Connor Power, who are all friendly to the Government and anxious and willing to assist the Executive in maintaining law and order.

I have a strong conviction that it would be expedient to go further and to approach some of the leaders of the extreme party, especially Mr Healy and Mr Sexton, who have I think recently shown a desire to come back to a more moderate policy and to abandon the resistance to all government and authority which is the keynote of the 'No Rent' manifesto.

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hope nothing will lessen our desire to remedy every proved grievance. We cannot lose anything by asking for and obtaining information from every source. If the complaints which Irish representatives may have to make are well founded it would be our wish and our duty to deal with them. If we think them unreasonable or if they are raised only to embarrass the Government and to make more difficult the action of the Executive we shall be able to disregard them. I think it probable that some of those with whom we have to deal are really irreconcilable; but even then it would be a distinct advantage to establish this clearly and to separate them from others of their party who may be more reasonable and more truly patriotic.

I proceed to consider the chief points to which it appears that the attention of the Government must be immediately directed.

1. As to the renewal of the Coercion Act. I have found a widespread objection to such a proposal. Men as different in their general view as Mr Goschen, Mr Broadhurst, Mr Shaw Lefevre, Mr R. N. Phillips, and Mr Collings have all within the last few days expressed to me their decided objection to such a course. I do not suppose it would be impossible to renew the Bill with the help of the Tory party, but I am certain that it would hopelessly divide the Liberals both in the House and in the country. If it is decided not to renew it I hope it may be found possible to release the whole of the suspects, except those accused of actual participation in outrage, at some not very distant date and before the expiry of the Act. There is some appearance both of weakness and of a grudging spirit in keeping men in to the last moment and letting them out only because of the political difficulty of renewing the legislation under which they are imprisoned. I am afraid the state of the country does not offer sufficient excuse for an amnesty, but some other might be found.

2. I agree with Mr Forster that some substitute for the Coercion Act must be found, and I also agree with him that there would be no objection to re-enact the compensation clauses of the Peace Preservation Act of 1870.

The proposal to re-enact some form of the curfew clause also deserves consideration and would not be seriously objected to; but it is altogether different with regard to the proposal to increase the power of search. This power is said to have been abominably misused in past times and the opposition to it would

be very strong. I do not think the result would be sufficiently certain to justify proceedings which require the utmost possible discretion on the part of the subordinate authorities entrusted with their execution.

3. I agree that the power of summary jurisdiction may with advantage be extended, but the authority should be limited to the infliction of six months' imprisonment.

4. The proposal to try agrarian offences by a special commission without a jury will provoke considerable discussion. I fear it will not have the effect of inducing evidence, and that it will break down from this cause.

Such a commission must of course try the most serious offences—murder for instance. In the event of a conviction would English opinion allow a death sentence to be executed without the verdict of a jury?

These proposals seem to me to exhaust the possibility of further repressive legislation. There are, however, many changes in administration which I am sure will have the attention of the Executive, and especially the administration of justice by military magistrates, who are at the same time judges and executioners, magistrates and policemen; and the constitution of the constabulary, which is at present a centralized force the management and responsibility for which evokes no local interest or support.

I venture to hope that whenever any further statement is made in Parliament with regard to the Irish policy of the Government that the subject will be treated as a whole, and the decision and recommendations of the Government will be announced with regard to the amendment or extension of the Land Act and other legislative reforms as well as with respect to repressive measures.

I assume that the question of arrears will be dealt with, and if this is done and some arrangement made for the temporary settlement of disputes as to fair rent pending a judicial decision by the Land Court it may be advisable to consider whether some further facilities may not be given to landlords for the summary determination of their rights so established. I am told that the present process is tedious and expensive and that the action of the landlords even for the recovery of a fair rent is seriously hampered by the six months' redemption. If the arrears were wiped off and a fair rent in every case adjudged it would be just and expedient to make the recovery of this rent as cheap and as easy as possible.



Another question which may yet give trouble, but which has not been fully considered, is the condition of the labourers. One of the Irish members—I think Mr Russell—has suggested that a Royal Commission should be appointed to report specially with reference to this matter. I believe that sooner or later it will be found necessary to undertake some public works in Ireland, though I fear that the majority of the Cabinet are opposed to the consideration of any such measure. But England is the only country in the world in which it has been found possible to leave public works entirely to private enterprise. State assistance in some form or another is afforded especially to the provision of communications and to great works of reclamation and main drainage, in every other country in Europe, and indirectly by grants of land and other privileges in the United States of America. I fully admit the difficulties and dangers of any such undertaking: the probability of jobbery and inefficiency; but having regard to the political exigencies of the situation as well as to the character and the poverty of the Irish people, I would at once appoint the strongest scientific and technical Commission it would be possible to obtain to report on certain broad classes of undertakings, especially on railways, reclamation, main drainage and harbours with a view to some considerable scheme of public works. I do not think the pecuniary risk would be so great as is generally supposed; and in any case I should regard the loss as a reasonable insurance against much greater evils.

J. C.  
21/4/82.

The discussion in the Cabinet to which Haicourt refers (see p. 28) took place on April 22 when I stated all that had passed up to that date and offered to continue the negotiations on my own responsibility and subject to disavowal if they failed. The Cabinet assented and at the same time decided not to renew the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus, but to consider a new Bill on minor points and generally on the lines of the Peace Preservation Act subsequently passed by Lord Salisbury's Government.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1886. The Act extended until December 31, 1887, the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Act of 1881, which prohibited the possession of arms in proclaimed districts

At this meeting Forster did not show any unfriendliness to the objects of the negotiation nor did he give any indication of a wish to resign.

It will be seen by the memorandum of the negotiations that he gave O'Shea permission to see Parnell in Kilmainham in order to ascertain what assurance the latter would be willing to give as regards outrages and intimidation. In Reid's *Life of Forster* it is stated that this was at the request of a colleague.<sup>1</sup> To the best of my knowledge and belief the assent was entirely Forster's own act.

On May 2, O'Shea having in the interval returned from Kilmainham and shown Forster the letter which he had received from Parnell, Forster stated that in his opinion the assurances were inadequate and unsatisfactory, and as they were accepted by the rest of the Cabinet he sent in his resignation.

It is, of course, not possible to be certain of the motives which guided his action, but on the face of it his conduct does not appear to be quite consistent. He was always ready to agree to release Parnell and his associates if the assurances which Parnell gave were satisfactory. He states, as one of three alternative events which, in his opinion, would make it safe to release:

an assurance upon which we could depend, that Parnell and his friends, if released, would not attempt in any manner to intimidate men into obedience to their unwritten law.<sup>2</sup>

In other communications he put the same demand into slightly different words, viz.:

a declaration by Parnell, which may be published, that he will not in future aid or abet intimidation.<sup>3</sup>

The terms of the assurance actually given by Mr Parnell were: If the arrears question be settled upon the lines indicated by us, I have every confidence—a confidence shared by my colleagues—that the exertion which we shall be able to make strenuously and

<sup>1</sup> T. Wemyss Reid, *Life of William Edward Forster* (1888), ii. 434.

<sup>2</sup> Reid, *op. cit.*, ii. 427-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 434.

unremittingly would be effective in stopping outrages and intimidation of all kinds.<sup>1</sup>

It seems impossible to distinguish between what Forster wanted and what he actually received. It is certain that if the alteration of a few words would have made a difference such an amendment might have been obtained by further negotiation. Forster was pressed to say in what respect the language actually used was insufficient, but by this time he had made up his mind to go and I have always thought that other causes were at work to bring him to this decision. It is clear that he had been for some time anxious, if he could do so with honour, to be relieved from a task in which he had little hope of ultimate success.<sup>2</sup>

Spencer's appointment was interpreted by many, and possibly by himself, as a condemnation of his own policy. Reid says that it was made at Forster's suggestion.<sup>3</sup> But even if so, he may have found the change more considerable than he at first expected. I was told at the time that he was annoyed at the demand made by Spencer to be consulted in acts of administration and in appointments in regard to which Forster had hitherto acted on his own responsibility entirely. The impression distinctly left on my mind by these events was, that after some hesitation, he had decided to take the opportunity and to magnify the difference between himself and his colleagues and to allow another to carry out the new departure which he saw the Cabinet had resolved to make.

Talking over matters with John Morley in August 1888, I received from him the following letter, with an enclosure from Mr Gladstone.<sup>4</sup>

*Private*

August 15, 1888.

My dear Chamberlain,

As Mr Gladstone says I am at liberty to mention to you the

<sup>1</sup> From Parnell's letter to O'Shea, April 28, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> See Reid, *op. cit.*, ii. 368. (Chamberlain's reference.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 423.

<sup>4</sup> The correspondence that follows was occasioned by Chamberlain's controversy with Parnell in 1888. (See p. 28 n.)

contents of the enclosed, I think there can be no harm in sending it to you. Please return to me at Huntingstile, Grasmere—whither I shall proceed after my exertion on Saturday.

Yours very truly,

JOHN MORLEY

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

August 11, 1888.

My dear Morley,

1. Your account (I use 'your' in the dual for yourself and Chamberlain) of Forster's resignation is very lowering to his intellect or his morale or both. I am sorry to say that I believe it to be true: and the best explanation I can frame for it, is that like many other men in crisis of their lives, he was completely self-deceived. Of course I cannot so much as glance at it. The unravelling must be left to others. Human nature is the most complex thing in the known creation; and politicians I have long ago concluded, represent far away the most complex form of human nature. They are not more dishonest than other people: but they are of all the least single-minded.

2. I should not have been sorry to see Chamberlain Secretary for Ireland *ab initio* in 1880. The appointment of Forster, which we thought a godsend; led to almost unmingled mischief. The only thing he did well was that for which he got no credit, namely so much of his business as related to the Land Act. But I never even knew that Chamberlain desired to succeed Forster, however others did. Would it have worked? Only I think upon one condition, a clear division of labour if practicable, and the appropriation of executive duties by the Viceroy. The queer arrangement of the present day is nothing to the purpose, if as I suppose, Ashbourne only looks after the prosecutions under the Crimes Act. Had I known Chamberlain's wish, I should not have set it aside without consideration and counsel. But I am writing from memory and memory may deceive. You are quite at liberty to mention what I have said to him if you think proper.

3. Please to thank him for offering me his memorandum, which I shall be glad to see if occasion arises. I have not yet got access to the most important part of my own records. All I have done is to ascertain from my private journal (which is arid as the

great desert but generally trustworthy) that I wrote to Chamberlain on April 19 and May 3; and I saw him on the 25th in company with Spencer and Forster. I have not the smallest idea that he kept back anything from me which I ought to have been told, but I think that the matter was extremely simple and the communications upon it few. I cannot understand the interview with James which you mentioned. It must have been subsequent and *narrative*.

4. My paper is in the main confined to showing that Forster, having laid down a condition for the release of Parnell, and having obtained its perfect fulfilment, resigned because he had not got it!

To this letter I replied

*Private*

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

August 16, 1888.

My dear Morley,

Thanks for the sight of Mr Gladstone's letter which I return.

1. I do not understand why he thinks our account of Forster's resignation lowering to his morale or his intellect. Surely it was not so bad as that even if our view was the right one and we do not know this as a certainty. To begin with he wanted to get out of the Irish Office and naturally was on the look-out for a reason. Then it was quite natural that he should feel Spencer's appointment as a slight, especially when he found out that Spencer did not intend to be King Log. I imagine he hesitated a good deal. If he had felt sure of Parnell's intentions, he would I suppose have been glad to take advantage of the change in his dispositions and to have 'wiped up' the mess he had made on the Coercion Act—but he was not certain and he finally decided not to risk it but to go out. The only thing that I seriously blame him for was his dramatic insistence on the reading of the omitted passage.<sup>1</sup> This was a blow below the belt. There was really not much in the passage itself and Forster knew that Mr Gladstone had not accepted it, but he could not resist the opportunity of making a point.

<sup>1</sup> On May 15, 1882, Parnell read to the House of Commons a version of his letter to O'Shea of April 28, 1882, in which the sentence about co-operation with the Liberal Party was omitted. Forster called attention to the omission, and, at his insistence, the missing passage was read by O'Shea.

2. Did you tell Mr G. that I wished to be Irish Secretary? If so it is a mistake. I had the greatest horror of it and believed that if I had to take it, it would probably destroy me as it had done Forster. I thought it very likely that Mr G. would ask me to take it, on the ground that I had been the most strenuous opponent of Forster's policy—and if he had done so I should have accepted as a matter of duty but with the greatest reluctance. Again when poor Lord Frederick Cavendish was murdered I thought it possible—even probable—that Mr Gladstone might ask me. I remember Healey [*sic*] spoke to me in the Lobby and told me frankly that he hoped it was not likely for my own sake. He said that he would personally do what he could to help me but that the situation was impossible. Sooner or later I should find myself unable to satisfy Irish demands and in conflict with Irish members and then they would no more spare me than anyone else. I thought he meant the warning kindly and believed he was right—I was therefore very glad that the task was not imposed on me.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

As regards the appointment to the post of Chief Secretary, I certainly anticipated that it would be offered to either Dilke or myself but it was a great relief to me to find that another was selected. The appointment of Lord Frederick Cavendish took the newspapers and politicians generally by surprise, as rumour had undoubtedly indicated me for the place.

It was of course insinuated by Reid, and men of his stamp, that Forster had been driven out of office by an unworthy Cabal in which the chief actors were Bright, Morley and myself. It may be sufficient answer to any such accusation to recall Mr Forster's own words spoken in the House of Commons on May 11, 1882:

The hon. Member<sup>1</sup> is apparently under the impression that I was hindered in the administration of my duties by my Col-

<sup>1</sup> Henry Chaplin, Conservative M.P., and member of all of Lord Salisbury's Cabinets.

leagues. We did entertain differences of opinion as to what should be done, and that is why I left them; but I am bound to state that I have never been thwarted in one single act upon which the Cabinet were agreed. If there were any faults in that administration they probably lie more in myself than in anyone else.

There is no doubt that a difference of opinion existed from the first in the Cabinet and that, while Forster represented one view, Bright and myself, generally supported by Mr Gladstone, took another.

In the first instance, Forster, speaking with all the authority of his position, carried the majority of the Cabinet with him; but towards the end of his term of office his influence was undoubtedly weakened both in the Cabinet and in the country—not so much by the attacks which were made upon him in the press, nor even by the arguments which were used in the Cabinet—but by the insuperable logic of facts which disclosed the failure of his policy, and the error of his conclusions.

He was, I believe, absolutely honest and conscientious. He was brave, and untiring in his work, but his judgment varied from time to time. He relied too much on *ex-parte* reports and he refused from the very first to accept advice, or even information, from any of the Irish members by whom he was opposed and even from those who generally supported the Government. It is not certain that any other man or any other policy would have succeeded where he failed, but his failure was complete, and the time had come to make a new experiment.

His resignation appeared to mark a new stage in the history of the Irish question and to close the long struggle that had been going on in the Cabinet since its first formation.

The situation seemed to most of us very hopeful. At last the alternative policy would have a chance of being fairly tried. I believed in the sincerity of Mr Parnell and that with his assistance the reforms required to complete and supplement the Land Act would be proceeded with, unprejudiced by arbitrary measures

of repression and coercion. The Arrears Bill was to be immediately introduced. Later on if it were found absolutely necessary, a moderate extension of the criminal law might be carried, without serious opposition even from the Irish members, but it was open to us to hope that even this might be found unnecessary and that the complete pacification of the country would give no excuse for any difference between the law in Ireland and in Great Britain.

On May 6 all these new born hopes were dashed ruthlessly to the ground by the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish in the Phoenix Park. The tempest of popular passion which followed made it impossible to carry out the intentions of the Government. The idea of conciliation was for a time made impossible, and once more, by no fault of their own, the Government were driven back to the policy of repression from which they had hoped finally to have shaken themselves free.

I was in Birmingham when the news of the murders was telegraphed. I came up the next day, Sunday, to London, and in the afternoon Parnell himself, accompanied by Mr McCarthy, called upon me. Parnell was white as a sheet, agitated and apparently altogether demoralized. At the time I thought he was abjectly afraid for his own life which he said was in danger.<sup>1</sup> 'They will strike at me next,' were his words. He asked me, 'What shall I do—what can I do?' I said, 'Your first duty is to denounce the assassins and to endeavour to secure their apprehension.'

He then read to me a manifesto which had been drawn up

<sup>1</sup> The account of Parnell's nervousness on May 7, 1882, appears to have originated in O'Shea's letter published in *The Times*, August 2, 1888, and was repeated by him in evidence before the Special Commission on October 31 of the same year. Dilke's account (*Life of Dilke*, i. 441) is similar to Chamberlain's. It was not written before 1888. (*Ibid.*, i, preface.) So is Michael Davitt's, in *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, p. 358, published in 1904. These accounts are not confirmed, however, by the narrative of the events of May 7, 1882, dictated by Justin McCarthy on April 21, 1887, and printed in Justin McCarthy and Mrs Campbell Praed, *Our Book of Memories* (1912), pp. 95-8. The question is fully discussed by Captain Henry Harrison in *Parnell Vindicated*, pp. 314-9 and 395-8.



that morning by Davitt and himself and which was subsequently published.

He said he had offered to Mr Gladstone to retire altogether from public life. I dissuaded him from such a course, which would almost justify suspicion of his complicity in a crime which I felt sure he detested.

Something was said (I think by O'Shea, who came in afterwards) about police protection for Parnell. (See O'Shea's evidence.) I believe that this was afterwards mentioned to Harcourt and the protection was granted. I think Harcourt told me so himself.<sup>1</sup>

After leaving me, Parnell called on Dilke,<sup>2</sup> who told me afterwards that he had gathered the same impression as I had from his manner and believed Parnell was in fear of his life.<sup>3</sup>

On May 8 the Chief Secretaryship was offered to Dilke.

In previous conversation we had agreed that in this case it would be unwise of him to take it unless the Cabinet were offered at the same time. But when the offer was actually made I went to him and urged him to accept it even without the Cabinet. I did this, partly because I believed that his acceptance would be the best chance for the success of the new policy, and partly on personal grounds as I thought it would constitute a great claim for admission to the Cabinet at an early date. Dilke, however, maintained his refusal and the appointment was ultimately accepted by Trevelyan.

The effect of the murders showed itself at once in the policy

<sup>1</sup> On October 31, 1888, O'Shea gave evidence before the Special Commission that in May, 1882, he had applied to Harcourt, then Home Secretary, for police protection for Parnell at the latter's request. Parnell in evidence before the Commission denied that he had authorized O'Shea to obtain police protection for him. (See Harrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-7.) In A. G. Gardiner's *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, i. 438, an extract from the diary of Lewis Harcourt (Sir William's son) records that on May 9, 1882 'Parnell has applied for police protection'. This may however only refer to O'Shea's application on Parnell's behalf.

<sup>2</sup> According to Justin McCarthy (McCarthy and Praed, *op. cit.*, p. 97.) Parnell's visit to Dilke preceded that to Chamberlain.

<sup>3</sup> See *Life of Dilke*, i. 441.

of the Government. It was decided, with great reluctance as far as Mr Gladstone and myself were concerned, that a Crimes Bill should be immediately introduced.

Harcourt was in charge and made a flaming speech in which the case for the Bill was put in the most rhetorical manner and entirely in the spirit and the tone engendered by the Phoenix Park catastrophe.

From this moment all hope of reconciliation with the Parnellite members departed. As the shock of the murders lessened their opposition became more bitter and obstructive. The promise of the Arrears Bill was lost sight of in resistance to new coercive legislation.

On May 13 I received the following letter from Mr Gladstone expressing his view of the duty of Mr Parnell in the new circumstances that had arisen, and from that time till the end of the discussion on the Bill I was pressing Parnell, through Labouchere and O'Shea, to keep his pledges and to restrain his followers from purely obstructive opposition. On the other hand, Parnell and his friends asked for some amendments and modifications in the Bill. Their demands did not seem to me, or to Mr Gladstone, unreasonable, but Harcourt would not listen to them, and insisted upon carrying his measure almost without amendment. He was strongly supported by the majority of the Cabinet including Lord Spencer, Lord Selborne, and Lord Hartington.

*Secret*

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

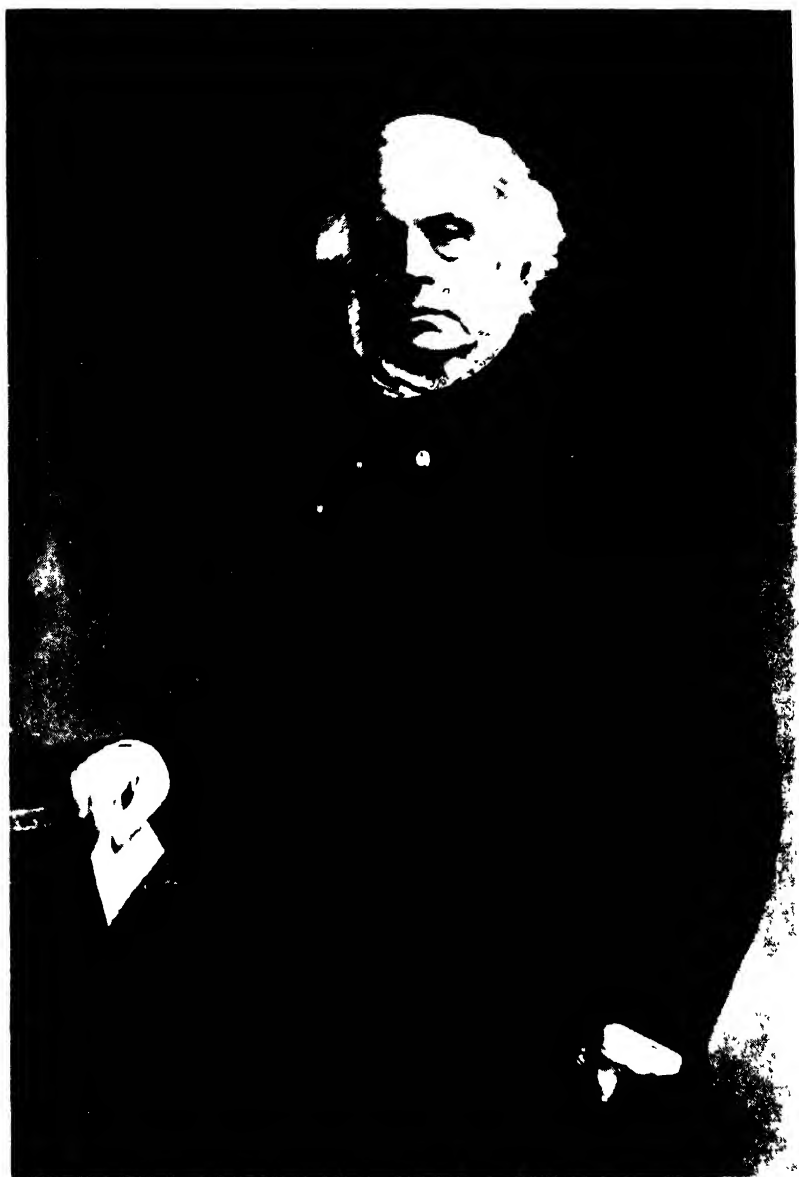
May 13, 1882.

My dear Chamberlain,

Referring to our conversation last night, I think there are some things we can and some things we cannot expect from men who however strong their opinions on the Land Question and Home Rule, yet abhor outrage, and have no wish (like the murderers) to exasperate the relations of Great Britain and Ireland.

We cannot expect, if they think the Bill excessive that they should forbear to say so, or should not try to amend it.

What I think we may in reason expect is that they should renounce all idea of obstruction, and consequently should take



*1881-89, Vol. 1*

JOHN BRIGHT

1811-89

From a photograph taken in 1882



*Picture Post Library*

HENRY EDWARD MANNING

1808-92

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

all detailed objections in the *Committee*, when I am confident they might expect fair play after having given it.

When I speak so seriously of obstruction I am not thinking of the loss of time it causes: at this moment it would lead to a resistless cry for a very severe urgency, and would seriously embitter the entire situation, and damage the prospect, whatever it is, of peace.

If you see O'Shea before Monday, please to thank him for his note to me, and I advise you speaking to him in this sense so far as you agree.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] Since I wrote the above I have had the inclosed from O'Shea. Please return it.

On May 16 a discussion took place in the House of Commons on the Kilmainham Treaty, in the course of which I defended the object and policy of the negotiations.

On the 20th I circulated the following memorandum to the Cabinet urging some concessions upon the Crimes Bill, but, although Mr Gladstone supported me, I could not secure the assent of the majority of the Cabinet.

### *Repression of Crime Bill*

I have read Lord Spencer's letter and the Minutes of Lord Northbrook and Lord Kimberley with a feeling almost of despair. They amount to this—that we are to stick to our Bill in every point of the slightest importance, and not make any concession to that Irish opinion which we professed to be ready to consult.

Parnell and his friends behaved very well over second reading, in reliance on our statements that their amendments will be fairly considered in Committee. If this means that they are all to be rejected, the Irishmen will have good reason to think themselves ill-used. They will have nothing to lose by obstruction—having gained nothing by more moderate courses—and they will obstruct accordingly. We shall have to get urgency and go through all the weary experience of the first Coercion Bill.

The amendments to which the Irishmen attach importance and on which they will have much to say are:

1st. The duration of the Bill. On this they are very strong and in my opinion we should lose nothing by meeting them. I am sure that if the Bill does not put down outrages in two years, English public opinion, as in the case of the Protection of Life Act, will be very restive under its prolonged application. As long as it is in force, its administration in every detail will be questioned and discussed in the House, and the best part of our time will be taken up in the consideration of the complaints to which it will give rise. There will be an open sore,—continued irritation between Irish members and ourselves, and no progress whatever in conciliating the country.

2nd. The Irishmen want clearer definition of the offences under the Act. Treason, Treason-felony, incitement to intimidation, unlawful assembly, suspicious circumstances, etc., etc.—all these are very vague, and if construed by the class of men who are the Resident Magistrates—or by the Police—may easily be made to include very innocent actions, and to be a source of tyrannical interference with the whole life of the people of Ireland.

I cannot believe that the wording of the Bill in these respects is so perfect that it cannot be amended, and unless we are prepared to meet the request for alteration by some kind of concession,—as we should most certainly do if this were a Scotch Bill opposed by Scotch members, I foresee the gravest trouble and dissatisfaction, even among our own party who are straining everything to give support to the Government.

We have brought in, according to the Tories and Forster, the strongest Coercion Bill ever introduced. Our opponents make capital of it both ways. They will denounce us in any case for not having brought it in earlier, and for not administering it with sufficient ferocity. At the same time, they insinuate that they would have found it unnecessary to resort to such stringent measures; and they seek by every means to increase the irritation of the Irish—in the well-founded hope of securing their votes at the next election. I cannot understand why we should allow this game to succeed.

In a letter from Labouchere, June 3, Mr Parnell is represented as still anxious for a *modus vivendi* and as being in fear of assassination by the extreme men.<sup>1</sup>

On June 8, no concessions having been made, Labouchere says that things will revert to the *status quo ante* Kilmainham Treaty.<sup>2</sup>

Parnell was asked for a definition of intimidation, and was willing to assent to the inclusion of violence, bodily harm, boycotting, including danger to, or a refusal to supply, the necessities of life.<sup>3</sup>

June 8. Mr Gladstone wrote to me as follows:

*Private*

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

June 8, 1882.

My dear Chamberlain,

There are one or two things which, if you have a convenient opportunity of time and place, I think you might usefully say to Mr Parnell, as your own opinions, if they are your own opinions, and if you think proper so to do.

1. It seems to me plain that any covenant as to policy on Irish affairs with Irish members is inadmissible as it would act prejudicially in respect to its own purpose: and even that intentions are to be more safely observed and defined, as a general rule, than indicated.

2. I am *very anxious* it should be borne in mind by those whom it concerns that the greatest mischief will arise from any undue, or even any very great prolongation of the proceedings in committee on the Crime Prevention Bill. Yesterday made it quite obvious, if it was doubtful before, that a certain number of Irish members (following a practice at present by no means confined

<sup>1</sup> The passage, of which this sentence is a paraphrase, actually occurs in Labouchere's letter of May 22, 1882; it is printed in A. L. Thorold, *Life of Henry Labouchere*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> The words 'things . . . Treaty' are between inverted commas in Chamberlain's MS. The letter actually reads: 'Parnell . . . considers that things revert to where they were under the Forster régime.'

<sup>3</sup> The words 'violence . . . life' are between inverted commas in Chamberlain's MS. The passage of which these words are a paraphrase is printed in Thorold, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

to small minorities) intend not merely to protest and argue, which would be quite fair and right, but in the event of not obtaining their way to punish the House of Commons for differing from them by the consumption of its greatest treasure, its time.

Ordinarily this is a punishment safe to those who inflict it, as well as most severe to those who suffer it and to the country at large.

But in this instance it will react powerfully on the Arrears Bill and upon all other legislation possible for Ireland.

Upon the Arrears Bill first and specially.

The time is very near at hand when we *must* return to the consideration of supply. Our first duty is to finish the present Committee if we can. I begin to fear, from the excessive time consumed at every step, that when this is done we shall be compelled to take Supply. The Tories when they have got the Crime Bill may not openly oppose the Arrears Bill but *through the medium of Supply* they can postpone it *ad libitum*, and with it whatever else lies behind it.

Thus the delay and defeat of Irish legislation will be the work of those who are now beginning to obstruct the Crimes Bill.

All this I was writing when your letter came in, inclosing one from Labouchere.

It is not for me to take any notice of what some would call the threat that things may revert to what they were under the Forster *régime*. My duty is only to examine what justice requires us to do towards promoting harmony and forwarding business.

Sir W. Harcourt stated yesterday with the utmost clearness that we must and will ask for the fourth Clause in such a form as to put down boycotting. I wish Mr L. had heard Mr Davey's excellent speech yesterday. I think Mr Synan's was in the same sense.

The Home Secretary stated not less clearly our disposition to consider without prejudice any amendment compatible with the full attainment of this object.

I believe that in the matter of what is called *coercion* my appetite is decidedly less keen than the average appetite even of English Liberals, and even of pretty stout ones. But nothing would induce



me to assent to a Clause doing less as to boycotting than what I have now said.<sup>1</sup>

I quite agree that we ought to come as promptly as we can to our conclusions as to any amendment of the Clause that may be proposed. But how can this be done while we are compelled by Biggar & Co. to waste our precious hours on a preliminary and now perfectly barren debate?

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

On June 11 some modifications were at last made in the Bill after a stormy discussion in the Cabinet.

On June 28 I wrote strongly to O'Shea who wrote to Parnell urging him to keep faith and pointing out that his conduct destroyed all confidence in his readiness to keep his engagements and would make further communications almost impossible.

These representations had little effect and the Bill was only passed after twenty-four days' discussion on July 12.

On July 5 the Arrears Bill was introduced. The discussion on the new Rules of Procedure had been interrupted by Irish business and towards the end of the session it was evident that it could not be completed within the ordinary time. It was decided therefore to hold an Autumn Session for the purpose of completing the discussion on Procedure.

On November 16 the Cabinet discussed Mr Gladstone's promise (made in a hurry and against the decision of the Cabinet) to Mr Yorke of a Committee on the Kilmainham Treaty. All the Ministers were opposed to the Committee and the motion was ultimately talked out.

On November 24 there was another debate in the House of Commons on the Kilmainham Treaty.

In the earlier part of the Session the Electric Lighting Bill

<sup>1</sup> 'How curiously this reads now in contrast with what Mr Gladstone has since said in favour of exclusive dealing. J. C. 1/91.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS., opposite the penultimate paragraph of Gladstone's letter.)

which was in my charge was passed, and on March 24 I spoke again on Fair Trade and Free Trade.

During the course of this year the affairs of Egypt gave much trouble and added to the embarrassments and difficulties of the Government.

The dual Anglo-French control had been established by Lord Beaconsfield in November 1879.<sup>1</sup> Some members of the Government (and notably Dilke) were opposed to the policy of this control but the Cabinet decided from the first to maintain its stipulations in the letter and the spirit, and to endeavour, in concert with France, to secure the peace of the country and respect to its financial obligations. The state of things was, however, most unsatisfactory. Extortion was practised on a large scale and in every department of the Government. The unfortunate *fellahin* were burdened with excessive taxation, rendered more onerous by the arbitrary way in which it was collected. Public works were suffered to get into disrepair and even the system of irrigation, on which the very life of the country depends, was allowed to fall into the greatest disorder. The finances were disorganized, and it appeared probable that at no distant date the Treasury would be bankrupt.

Under these circumstances discontent everywhere prevailed and found a spokesman in Arabi Bey, a Colonel in the army of poor extraction, who placed himself at the head of the movement, although he was probably himself controlled by cleverer and still more unscrupulous persons.

A Chamber of Notables was sitting at Cairo and at first seemed to fulfil its functions as a representative body fairly well. Subsequently it came for a time under the control of Arabi, and insisted on interfering in financial matters thereby endangering the arrangements which had been come to with the representatives of the Bondholders.

On January 7, 1882 the Cabinet agreed to a joint note in support of the Khedive against the revolutionary party. At this time I opposed but was in a minority. My view was that we had not

<sup>1</sup> Established on November 18, 1876; re-established on September 4, 1879.

sufficient information to appreciate properly the so-called revolutionary movement. It might be the legitimate expression of discontent and of resistance to oppression. If so, it ought to be guided but not repressed.

In February, Hartington was in favour of an Anglo-French forcible intervention. Other members of the Government desired Turkish intervention and this was favoured by Mr Gladstone. Dilke suggested Turkish intervention at the mandate of Europe, but the Turks declined to accede to any suggestion until too late and the French also hesitated to give their assent to it.

On May 12 France agreed to Turkish intervention but subsequently withdrew her assent.

June 1. It was decided to send the ships to Alexandria.<sup>1</sup>

June 11. The riots took place at Alexandria and British subjects were killed and wounded.

By this time I had come to the conclusion that action had become inevitable and, accordingly, I joined Hartington in pressing for active measures. At the same time, however, I desired to base intervention entirely on the necessity of keeping faith with the Khedive and obtaining reparation for the massacres and securing the safety of the Suez Canal. I desired to separate these grounds entirely from the claims of the Bondholders, which I thought should stand on their merits and not be supported by the armed intervention of an European power. I had come to the conclusion (chiefly owing to his action after he had attained to power) that Arabi was only a military adventurer and that there was no national party in the true sense of the word. His chief object appeared to be the increase of the numbers and the pay of the army and especially of the officers, and it was evident that his uncontrolled supremacy would very shortly bring about bankruptcy and anarchy.

On June 21 instructions were sent to Dufferin<sup>2</sup> and these were to a great extent framed on a minute which I circulated to the Cabinet.

<sup>1</sup> According to Dilke, the date was May 31. (*Life of Dilke*, i. 459.)

<sup>2</sup> Lord Dufferin and Ava was British ambassador at Constantinople, where a conference on the Egyptian question was to take place.

## [Minute]

Sir H. D. Wolff is to ask the Prime Minister on Thursday the following question:

'Whether Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary at the Conference would be instructed to propose that within certain limits of international obligation, the people of Egypt should have some control of their own affairs.'

I assume that no further information will be given as to the instructions to Lord Dufferin, but on several grounds it would be very desirable that some early statement should be made of the views of the Government with respect to the internal affairs of Egypt.

At present I think that the only reference to them is contained in the short sentence, several times repeated in the despatches and instructions to the effect that H.M. Government would view with favour the judicious extension of free institutions.

But this does not touch the real point of interest. I think that Liberal opinion in the country will be extremely restive at the idea of armed intervention, either for the maintenance of the control in the interests of the Bondholders, or for the enforcement of restrictions on the right of the Egyptian people to manage their own affairs.

No doubt the Control has worked well for Egyptian interests and has lessened the burden of taxation and promoted material prosperity. But if the people of Egypt prefer native administration with all its consequences to the inflexible severity and honesty of European control, it is not England's business or right to force on them an unpopular system which could only be permanently maintained against their wishes by practically assuming the Government of the country.

On the other hand, if a change is to be made in a system which has the sanction of International agreement, it should be on the demand of some body entitled to speak for the Egyptian people, and not at the dictation of a military adventurer supported by an army which he is forced to keep in good temper by bribes of pay and promotion, and whose action compromises the welfare and liberties of the people as well as the interests of foreigners.

The Notables have shown some independence and seem to be the nucleus of a really national and patriotic party. Should not

intervention whether by the Sultan or anyone else, have for its chief object the liberation of this body from the military tyranny to which they have been subjected—with the understanding that any recommendations it may make for the revision of existing institutions will be favourably considered?

In other words, intervention should be directed not to impose on Egypt institutions of our choice, but to secure for the Egyptian people a free choice for themselves so far as this may not be inconsistent with the permanent interests of other Powers.

If this is the view of the Cabinet I do not think it has been sufficiently expressed in any despatch, and I should like to see an early opportunity taken to say that we were inclined to encourage the further development of representative institutions which have been swallowed up in the military movement of Arabi Bey, and that we draw a sharp distinction between the *Pronunciamiento* of this adventurer which derives no support from the bulk of the agricultural population, and the national movement which Arabi has endeavoured to enlist on his side and the legitimate aspirations which it is not our duty or our wish to discourage, and that as far as our influence goes it would be exerted on behalf of such modification of the *status quo* as might prove to be in accordance with the wishes of the Egyptian representatives relieved from the pressure of the purely military party.

On June 24, as I learn from Dilke since, an offer came from the Sultan to give to England a convention similar to the Cyprus convention,<sup>1</sup> which would have authorized us to take possession of the country subject to a tribute and the acknowledgment of the Sultan's suzerainty. This offer was never communicated to the Cabinet generally.

July 11. The bombardment of Alexandria took place and Mr Bright resigned.

July 20. The Cabinet decided to send Lord Wolseley and to ask for a vote of credit.

July 25. I spoke in favour of the vote of credit explaining the cause of our intervention and the danger of anarchy if we had not interfered.

<sup>1</sup> The British-Turkish convention of 1878.

About the same time Turkey proposed intervention but it was now too late and was declined by the Cabinet.

September 13. Tel-el-Kebir was fought and immediately afterwards the Cabinet discussed the future settlement of Egypt.

October 18. I circulated the following minute, and another,<sup>1</sup> on the proposals put before the Cabinet by Lord Granville.

[Minute]

There is some evidence of the existence of an uneasy feeling among Liberals with respect to Egyptian questions. It cannot be concealed that in spite of the apparently almost unanimous approval of the London and provincial press the war has never been popular. It has been accepted on the authority of the Government, and especially of Mr Gladstone, as a disagreeable necessity, but if the campaign had been protracted we should have had a *mauvais quart d'heure*.

At the present time dissatisfaction exists on the following points:

First, the appointment of Baker Pasha, which is assumed to have been made with the approval of or even on the recommendation of the English Government.

It certainly seems strange that neither England nor India could furnish for a coveted post of great responsibility a man who is not tainted by conviction for an act, which if committed by a Turk would have been stigmatized as a Bulgarian atrocity.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the fate of Arabi. If he were executed there would be a storm of public indignation. As far as we are concerned he is a prisoner of war and we cannot rid ourselves of responsibility by handing him over to the Government of the Khedive, which only exists owing to our interference. It would be better that we should accept the offer of the Egyptian Government to hand him and his fellows over to us and that we should secure his immediate expatriation, leaving the Khedive to deal with him as he thinks fit if he should ever return.

<sup>1</sup> In the Gladstone Papers (Add. MSS. 44125, ff. 168-172).

<sup>2</sup> The officer in question, Valentine Baker, generally known as Baker Pasha, had been dismissed from the British Army in 1875, after being convicted of indecent assault. He entered the Egyptian service in 1882.

Thirdly, and most important, as regards the civil re-organization of the country. There is great anxiety lest after all the Bondholders should too evidently be the only persons who have profited by the war, and lest phrases which have been used concerning the extension of Egyptian liberties, and Egypt for the Egyptians, should prove to have no practical meaning.

After carefully reading the minutes which have been written on the subject I fear that the proposals of all of them excepting that of Lord Northbrook, but including Mr Brett's, would lend themselves to unfavourable construction. In every case financial control and financial interference are made the foundation of the proposals, and the extension of Egyptian liberty is limited in respect of all that free nations consider of the greatest importance. The difficulty of the situation consists in the apparent impossibility of conciliating the natural intentions and wishes of English Liberalism with the privileges claimed by the other European Powers and especially by France. It appears to me that our first duty is to our own principles and our own supporters, and that at the present time we should formulate what we believe to be the best arrangements and should not attempt in the first instance to modify or alter these to suit the supposed preferences of other nations. If at a subsequent stage they insist on limitations of the liberties which we are willing to concede it may be necessary for the sake of peace to give way, but even in that case we shall have discharged our obligations and the responsibility for the results will lie with others and not with us. I am not certain, however, that in this respect we have really much to fear. Germany and Austria will probably concur in any settlement agreed to by France and England, and France will hardly accept the invidious position of opposing the legitimate aspirations of national sentiment, supported by all the influence of England, in the interests of financiers and speculators.

Clemenceau in a very remarkable speech has strongly repudiated such an idea and even if Gambetta were to attempt opposition I do not believe the majority of the French people or the French Chamber would support him.

To resume, we have in Egypt interests and duties. The interests are a fair guarantee for the peace and order of the country, and the security of the Suez Canal and our route to India. The duty cast upon us as the Liberal Government of a free nation is to secure to

the Egyptian people the greatest possible development of representative institutions.

As regards our interests they will be both safeguarded as far as this is possible by the establishment of a trustworthy army and police, the details of which may be left to the military advisers and experts. As long as the army is faithful no rebellion or revolutionary proceeding is possible, and the establishment of such a force, which would make the Khedive practically despotic renders it still more incumbent on the English Government not to leave the country without some security for its liberties.

Before passing to the primary questions of financial control and representative government attention may be called to Nubar Pasha's urgent demand for a reform of native tribunals. It is not quite clear what is the exact measure he would propose; but I believe the solution is to be found in better pay and greater security in the tenure of office to native judges of the first instance. Their decisions may not always be trustworthy and their courts may be frequently corrupt, but their procedure will be better understood and appreciated by the natives than any of exotic growth, and for greater security an appeal may be given to a higher court which may surely be constituted in such a way as to be above suspicion.

As regards representative government the opinions of all authorities are tainted by the inherent distrust of authorities of the capacity of the people to govern themselves. Macaulay's illustration of the man who would not go into the water until he had learned to swim is the type of all the objections raised to the extension of self-government amongst the people. It is said the *fellahin* are not fitted for representation. I should like to know any case in the history of any nation when the unrepresented classes have not been met with the same objection by those who have arrogated to themselves the right of disposing of their destinies. At the present moment it is the stock argument of the Tories with regard to the agricultural labourers.

Mr Brett in describing Sir A. Colvin's<sup>1</sup> plan assumes that there would be no objection to an elected Chamber of Notables; but Sir A. Colvin himself makes no mention of such a representative body.

Mr Brett would limit their powers to 'diminishing the annual

<sup>1</sup> British controller of Egyptian finance.



expenditure, and would make the payment of the interest on the public debt a preliminary necessity. The first limitation would prevent the Chamber from increasing the salaries of the Judges, from making necessary provision for the execution of justice and from considering any proposals for promoting national education. Practically it would leave the initiative in these respects in the case of public works, and in fact of every important act of government in the hands of the Khedive and his Ministers, and the only function of the Chamber would be the power of refusing expenditure which might be of the first importance to the country, while annually providing as a matter of course all that is required to meet the service of the debt and the claims of foreign creditors.

It seems to me that the only limitation on the power of the Chamber which can properly be proposed is the fixing of a maximum both of numbers and expenditure in the case of the army. This may be justified as well in the interests of Egypt itself as for the general peace of Europe.

If these full privileges were reserved to the Chamber, there would appear to be no objection to allowing the Khedive, if he desired it, to appoint an Englishman as Minister of Finance, but the appointment must be revocable by the Khedive and not subject to the approval of the English Government. There would also be little fear of the realization of Sir A. Colvin's anticipations with regard to the pressure which might be put on Egyptian Ministers. A representative chamber would not be amenable to the same kind of influence as individuals and would resist expenditure which was not clearly in the interests of the country and which tended to increase the burden of taxation on their constituents. I do not believe that such a representative body would ever consider it advisable to repudiate the debt. It would have to do so in face of the opposition of the Minister of Finance and presumably of the whole Egyptian Government, and it would understand and appreciate the importance of maintaining the national credit, and it would know that such a course of action would make possible the interference of the Great Powers. If present arrangements remain unaltered it might also lead to decrees from the tribunals, such as those which caused the action of Prince Bismarck and originated the present crisis. But as regards the latter contingency, in my opinion it would be right for the English Government to propose the abrogation of the

decree which enabled the tribunals to take cognizance of the claims of creditors on the Egyptian Government; but even if this were acceded to the repudiation of the debt would in the special circumstances of Egypt be an evident source of danger which could not escape the consideration of the popular representatives.

But in any, and in every case, I hold that we ought to lay it down as in our opinion a principle worthy of acknowledgment that the relations of the Bondholders to Egypt concern the parties and the parties alone, and ought no more to be the subject of international interference than similar relations between the Governments and Bondholders of the United States, of Spain, or of Mexico. It would at all times be the duty of the English diplomatic agent to represent to the Egyptian Government the nature and the gravity of the interests at stake, and his representations would in all human probability be effective; but the payment of the debt should be the free act of the Egyptian Government and people and not the result of external compulsion.

As regards the administration of the Daira and domains it appears that these have given rise to more just complaint than any other portion of the present financial system. It concerns essentially Egyptian interests, and it would probably be for the advantage of all parties that the management should to the greatest possible extent have local knowledge and experience. I think, therefore, that our proposals should be that these administrations should be controlled by the Egyptian Government who should be free to appoint to the various offices the best men they can find whether foreigners or natives.

I do not understand that these proposals go much, if, any, further than those made by Lord Northbrook, with the general spirit of whose paper I entirely concur. I admit that such a programme may very probably meet with opposition from foreign Powers, but I repeat my conviction that it would be much better that our proposals should be defeated by the selfishness of other nations concerned than that we should sacrifice our principles and convictions beforehand in the hope of meeting objections which may never be seriously pressed. We shall in any case have discharged our responsibility and have a fair record with which to appeal to our own supporters.

On December 10 Mr Gladstone was talking of resigning, telling Harcourt that his brain power was no longer equal to constructive legislation.

On December 15 he wrote to me saying, 'a monitor from within tells me that though I may still be equal to some portions of my duties, or as little unequal as heretofore, there are others which I cannot face.'

On December 16 there were changes in the Cabinet and Lord Derby joined the Government. Mr Gladstone desired to make Dilke a member of the Cabinet but the Queen objected to have him as Chancellor of the Duchy which was vacant by Bright's resignation. Mr Gladstone accordingly asked me to take the Duchy and to give Dilke my place at the Board of Trade. Although such a change would have been excessively disagreeable to me I did not feel that I had any right to stand in Dilke's way and consequently agreed. I believe, however, that the Queen again objected and at last Dodson<sup>1</sup> accepted the Duchy and Dilke went to the Local Government Board.

December 19. I spoke at Ashton under Lyne at a meeting of the National Liberal Federation. Besides dealing with the Irish question I entered into a lengthened defence of our Egyptian policy.

One of the newspapers having asserted that in something I had said I was attacking Bright, I wrote to him to deprecate any such construction, and received the following letter.

One Ash,  
Rochdale.

January 4, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

I never thought that any word of yours was directed against me, but what you said at Ashton shows how great is the difference between us. You join together 'the policy of non-intervention and peace at any price', as if the one had necessarily any connection with the other. A man may be absolutely against intervention, and yet ready and eager to fight against anyone attacking himself or his Country. But further, you believe the policy of

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Dodson (later Lord Monk Bretton), President of the Local Government Board, 1880-2.

non-intervention 'to be an unworthy and ignoble doctrine', though it is a doctrine held by Washington, and to which Civilization and Christianity are evidently tending. You speak of 'the honour and interests of England' as justifying intervention, and you refer, further on, to certain 'stock arguments of despotism'—are not your words the stock arguments of the Jingo School? I have heard them for forty years in the House of Commons. They are the words of Palmerston throughout his mischievous career, and from William III to our own time they have been spoken in defence of all the crimes which have built up the Debt and wasted the wealth and the blood of our people. You speak of the critical time when the ships went to Alexandria—but you will remember that the only reason given in and to the Cabinet was that there was danger to English subjects, not that the Forts were to be bombarded and war to be begun. I agree with you that the question was not sufficiently discussed, and I think we left the matter too easily in the hands of Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville.

But the French did not think it their duty to attack the Forts, and they are now not obliged to justify their conduct by false statements such as our Government is driven to when its members say the bombardment was not war but a necessary act of self-defence. I told Childers as we came from Osborne that the war was bad enough, but that the statements made in its defence were monstrous, and such as I could not have seemed to consent to had I remained on the Treasury Bench.

But I need not discuss this unpleasant matter further, and I hope sincerely that its ill-effects may turn out less evil than I fear. I am silent because I do not wish to add to difficulties, and I prefer to treat the Egyptian incident rather as a deplorable blunder than as a crime. In this only does it differ, in my judgment, from the worst doings of Palmerston and the more recent scandals of Beaconsfield.

Forgive this frank explanation in answer to your friendly letter. I hope we may act together on questions and subjects less unhappy than the one which has caused your letter and this reply.

Believe me, always,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN BRIGHT

There is no doubt that at this time the Egyptian intervention

was unpopular with the majority of the Liberal Party, and nothing but Mr Gladstone's personal influence could have secured its permanence. If Mr Bright had led an agitation against it I believe he would have been able to destroy the Government. There was an uneasy feeling that the forces of Great Britain were being used to save the pockets of the Bondholders. The disparity between the English and the Egyptian armies destroyed any enthusiasm for our victory at Tel-el-Kebir, and there was accordingly a general desire that we should come away as quickly as possible and serious doubts whether we ought ever to have gone. In this matter, however, I sided with Hartington rather than with the dissatisfied Radicals who were represented in the Cabinet throughout the discussions of this, and subsequent, years by Sir William Harcourt. There is no doubt, however, that in the early stage of our occupation we were all desirous of a speedy evacuation and believed that the conditions which we had laid down would be accomplished in the course of a year or two at the outside.

## CHAPTER IV

1883

**D**URING this and the succeeding year the affairs of Egypt were a source of continuous anxiety and embarrassment. Difficulties arose with the French in an endeavour to arrange the finances and to obtain a modification of the international arrangements regulating the interest on the Debt, but the most serious troubles were caused by the complications in the Sudan.

In the latter part of 1883 it was decided that the British troops should leave Cairo and that the garrison of Egypt should be materially reduced in preparation for a speedy evacuation of the country. But before this intention could be carried out the Egyptian army under Hicks Pasha was annihilated by the troops of the Mahdi and a subsequent expedition under Baker Pasha also met with a crushing defeat. These expeditions were undertaken in spite of the representations of the English Government, who disclaimed all responsibility for the occupation of the Sudan. It was not, however, until after the defeat that the British Government adopted a mandatory tone and insisted on the abandonment by Egypt of any attempt to retain the Sudan. Chérif Pasha, who was then Prime Minister, resigned and Nubar Pasha undertook office with the understanding that the instructions of the British Government would be observed. From this time the sole object which we had in view was the safe withdrawal of the garrisons and with this obligation it became necessary to countermand the order for the reduction of the Egyptian garrison. The efforts made to relieve the garrisons were however undertaken too late. In February [1884] Tokar and Sinkat fell and the garrisons were massacred.

1884

In January Gordon had been sent at his own suggestion to Khartoum with precise instructions not to attempt to maintain the position but to endeavour peacefully to withdraw the garrison. At this time Gordon agreed that the retention of the Sudan was impossible and undesirable and in asking leave to try the effect of his influence he expressly stipulated that no troops should be sent to his assistance. The arrangement made with Gordon was settled by Lord Granville and Mr Gladstone without consulting other members of the Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> I was myself in Birmingham at the time and only heard of the decision afterwards.

In May news came that Khartoum was surrounded and Gordon asked for military assistance. The Government believed that it was in his power to leave at that time and as they maintained their determination not to hold the country they were unwilling to send an expedition which must of necessity be very costly both in life and treasure. The question was continually under discussion and at last the progress of events and the pressure of public opinion made an expedition necessary, and on August 5, 1884, Mr Gladstone moved a vote of credit for the relief of Gordon. There is no doubt that throughout this period the Government had no settled policy but adopted its decisions from time to time without attempting to look forward into the future. Harcourt strongly advocated what was known as the 'policy of scuttle' and on several occasions threatened resignation if any definite steps were proposed to carry assistance to Gordon or to the garrisons. Lord Granville was not equal to the emergency. He wanted clearness of view and strength to press the conclusions at which he arrived. Mr Gladstone never seemed to bend his mind to the position. Ordinarily he allowed discussion to go on and reserved his own opinion till the last, and then endeavoured to harmonize the discordant views of his Cabinet. The result was a policy of drifting which fairly laid open the Government to the censure of its opponents.

<sup>1</sup> Gordon was appointed by Hartington, Granville, Northbrook and Dilke. Gladstone was consulted by telegraph.

The financial negotiations which were in the charge of Childers, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Granville were also weakly conducted. There was great dread of offending France and the refusal of the French representatives at the Conference to agree to the British proposals caused the failure of the negotiations. My view of the proper policy was placed before the Cabinet in August in the shape of a draft circular to the Powers. In this despatch I proposed to call attention to the failure of the Conference and to the present position of Egyptian finance. The Egyptian treasury was empty, the liabilities on the floating debt falling due, the indemnities not paid, and there were not sufficient funds even to meet the current expenses of administration. If no remedy were found, the salaries of officials and the general provision for ordinary administration must fall into arrear, to the complete and irretrievable disorder of Egyptian administration. The Government could not regard the situation with indifference as they were temporarily responsible for the peace and order of the country. I proposed to point out that if the Egyptian Government were entirely independent of European control they would naturally take the course which had been adopted by other governments in similar circumstances. The right to provide for the necessary cost of administration as a first charge on the revenues was a right inherent in every government. Her Majesty's Government could not admit their presence in Egypt would justify them in using force to compel the Egyptian Government to fulfil obligations which it would certainly repudiate if it were entirely independent, and they were not prepared to act as instruments to extort from the Egyptian people taxation which after full enquiry they believed the country could not be justly called upon to endure. They had, therefore, come to the conclusion that they ought not to use their influence to prevent the Egyptian Government from suspending the operation of the law of liquidation in order that the deficit on the expenses of administration might be met from the revenues. They must also agree that the payment of the indemnities and of the floating debt must be postponed, while recognizing the special character of these liabilities and the duty of proposing at an early date



some method of discharging them. In making this communication the Government would take the opportunity of renewing the assurances already given that their presence in Egypt was not dictated by any exclusive interest and that it was their earnest desire to terminate it at the earliest possible date. They had three objects in view—the peace and good government of the country, the security of the Suez Canal, and the protection of Egypt against foreign aggression. They believed the second of these objects might be secured by proposals for the neutrality of the country already submitted to the Powers. As regards the other two objects they still thought that an arrangement similar in principle to the international agreement affecting Belgium might provide the necessary guarantees and they were ready to concert with the Powers the details of such an agreement. It would at the same time relieve them from a responsibility which they had undertaken in no selfish spirit and offer a reasonable prospect of orderly and settled government in Egypt under the protection of the European Concert.

This draft was received not unfavourably by Mr Gladstone, but it was impossible to get it or any other definite policy accepted unanimously by the Cabinet.

1883

It was generally understood that the parliamentary session of 1883 was to be devoted to legislation for England and Scotland. The Cabinet decided once more to postpone the question of the franchise and to deal with some of the arrears of past sessions including the extension of local government in the counties—if time permitted. Accordingly, the attention of the House of Commons was called to the codification of the law, corrupt practices at elections, Scotch universities, bankruptcy and patents, London Government, and the extension of local government. The questions of bankruptcy and patents were in my charge as President of the Board of Trade. The Bills dealing with them were referred to the Grand Committee on Trade which

was thus tried for the first time. It proved to be a considerable success and the Bills were discussed carefully and without much party feeling by a large and businesslike Committee—the decisions of which were respected by the House so that both Bills became law without unreasonable opposition.<sup>1</sup>

On February 23 I spoke in the debate on the Address, and defended myself against attacks which were made upon me in connection with the Irish policy of the Government, especially in reference to the Kilmainham Treaty and the differences which led to Forster's resignation.

On April 13 I spoke on the difficulties which had arisen in Bechuanaland, where Boer freebooters were invading the territory of the protected chiefs and breaking the convention which had been made at the time of the retrocession of the Transvaal.

Besides this parliamentary work, which was very severe, I undertook in this year a great number of platform engagements and commenced the campaign of constructive Radicalism which soon brought me into conflict with the Whigs—both in the Cabinet and outside. The Radicals in the Cabinet were now only Dilke and myself and we found our views ignored or outvoted by the majority of our colleagues. In the country, however, our opinions were endorsed by at least four-fifths of the Liberal Party. It was clear that this state of things could not continue indefinitely and that as soon as the franchise was extended the policy of the Government would have to be modified in the Radical sense. My first effort was to induce the Cabinet to take up the franchise question as early as possible and to separate it from redistribution which was sure to provoke local jealousies and would raise an opposition that might be fatal to the Franchise Bill. I desired also to secure the equality of franchise throughout

<sup>1</sup> The Bankruptcy Act set up a bankruptcy department at the Board of Trade and provided for the appointment of official receivers in all the principal commercial centres in the country. They were to call meetings of creditors, investigate the affairs of insolvent debtors and have powers to initiate prosecutions. The Patents Act expedited the procedure for obtaining a patent and reduced the fees payable for patents for periods of not more than four years. (See Garvin, *op. cit.*, i. 417–20.)

the Three Kingdoms and to prevent the interposition of any fancy vote such as the cumulative or minority vote, which was then being strongly supported by Courtney, Fawcett, and some other members of the Liberal Party. These were the main objects of the platform campaign of 1883.

I spoke on February 1 at Swansea on the programme of the session.

On March 30 at Birmingham I defended the policy of the Government in Ireland and Egypt against Lord Salisbury's criticism. In the course of this speech I spoke of Lord Salisbury as the representative of a class which 'toil not, neither do they spin'.

On June 13 on the occasion of the demonstration in honour of Mr Bright at Birmingham I contrasted the proceedings with those at the recent royal pageant at Moscow and used words which appear to have given some offence to the Queen. In the same speech I urged the immediate duty of proceeding with parliamentary reform and expressed my personal preference for equal electoral districts, manhood vote and payment of members. At the same time I indicated that concessions would have to be made and that the proposals of the Government would not go so far as my own inclinations.

On June 30 I presided at the Cobden Club Dinner. My selection for this position had been made the subject of a petty demonstration on behalf of the Whigs, several of whom sent in their resignation to the Club. On this occasion I defended Radical views and claimed the right of full discussion without attempting to commit less advanced colleagues. I insisted that moderate Liberals must make at least this concession if party union were to be maintained at all, and that the Radicals in a government were bound to maintain their principles, and while agreeing to accept much less than their full demands must continue to act as pioneers and to prepare the way for future progress. These two speeches gave rise to Tenniel's picture in *Punch* of 'The Daring Duckling', in which it will be seen that the artist hit off the situation with admirable felicity. They also led to the following correspondence with Mr Gladstone:

*Private*10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

July 2, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

I think that general opinion, which I accept for myself, is to the effect that your speech on Saturday has substantially obviated any inconvenient results that might have been apprehended from the preceding speech at Birmingham, or from the construction put upon it. And I thank you for the effort you have made.

On the other hand, I venture to anticipate your concurrence on two points. The first is, that though speech cannot universally be confined by a Minister within the limits of action to which he has conformed, yet that declarations tending to place him markedly in advance or in arrear of his colleagues on subjects of high politics, or otherwise delicate, should be made as rarely and reservedly, and if I may say so as reluctantly as possible. If for example, the Government were about proposing a County Suffrage Bill as the measure proper, in its province, to meet the wants of the country, it is evident how its dignity and weight would be lessened, and the prospects of the measure itself put in jeopardy, if the slowest 'boy in the class' were then to signify his apprehensions that it went too far, and the quickest his readiness to go a good deal further.

My second point is that, as Ministers, we are bound to recognize the balanced character of the system under which we live, and of which we are the official defenders. So that the rights of the Crown, guaranteed by the Constitution, and not less sacred in the eyes of the people than are their own liberties, and not those only but all that belongs to the person and family of the Sovereign, are specially in our charge, and are to be watched over by us with careful and even jealous respect. Of course I am not using words as a test of formula, but simply as expressive of a general spirit and mode of action, which, so far as I know, have been loyally acknowledged by all statesmen of Liberal opinions, and have left them abundant scope for the purposes of public duty.

Believe me, always,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

*Private*

House of Commons.

July 2, 1883.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I thank you very much for your kind letter, and I am glad that you are able to approve of what I said at the Dinner last Saturday.

I believe that I can accept without reserve your two points.

As to the first, I will only say that it must be to the interest of every Government that its several members should not entirely lose their individuality in the corporate existence, but that they should retain their representative character and thus continue to bring to the Government of which they form part whatever influence they may have possessed in this capacity.

As regards your second point, I accept that also without hesitation; and I have never consciously failed in respect to the Sovereign or Royal Family.

I have seen in Tory newspapers comments on a detached passage in my Birmingham speech, which imputes to me a meaning not intended by myself, and, I think, not consistent with the plain sense of the whole passage. I was contrasting the two great demonstrations which had taken place in the course of a single fortnight—the Coronation at Moscow and the Bright celebration at Birmingham. I noticed the presence at the former of the high officials of the Empire and of the representatives of Foreign States. I pointed out that at Birmingham there were neither the dignitaries of State nor the Representatives of Royalty, and I added that no one missed them because it was essentially a popular demonstration. In fact, I was indicating the different character of the two events but without intending any invidious disparagement of either ceremony.

I make this explanation, because I assume that you must have had these comments in your mind, in laying down the general principles contained in your letter—and to which I have no difficulty in yielding a willing assent.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

November 26. I spoke at Bristol, advocating dealing with the franchise before redistribution, the equality of Ireland with regard to this reform, and protesting against minority representation.

In the same speech I referred briefly to the programme of the future, which must have the consideration of the enlarged electorate. I included religious equality, free education, the amendment of the Artisans' Dwellings Act, some provision for the agricultural labourers, popular control of the liquor traffic and the readjustment of the burdens of taxation. This speech brought me another letter from Mr Gladstone, which I understood to be the result of some representation from the Queen.

*Secret*

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

December 3, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

I see you are to speak to-morrow at Wolverhampton. Will you forgive my expressing the hope that you will do it with as much reserve on pending and proximate subjects as your conscience will allow. You will already have perceived that effects not intended or desired result from the opposite course. It is I know difficult and disagreeable to maintain these reserves, and rein in a strong conviction, a masculine understanding, and a great power of clear expression: but pray be as cruel as you can to your own gifts. I cannot now explain my reasons for writing, but you may divine them, and will I am sure excuse the act.

Always,

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] Goschen finally deterred by the question of sight. A. Peel accepts.

(This PS. referred to the speakership offered to Goschen.)

On December 4 I spoke at Wolverhampton.

On December 6 Mr Gladstone wrote again:

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

December 6, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

Your letter explains to me a passage in your speech, which had seemed to me mysterious: that in which you implied that the decision of the Cabinet might change from intervening circumstances. This I now see you put in as a needful reserve. But unfortunately you proceeded upon a misapprehension such as will

sometimes occur: the Cabinet only decided the one important point that *if* we proceed with the subject of Representation it shall be with Franchise only.

I do not recognize the words which you write in inverted commas, and in particular the word 'expressly'.<sup>1</sup> There was nothing I think to prevent members of the Government from stating considerations bearing in a particular direction, and it is in the manner of doing this that so much care is required; since all, whatever their leanings, may claim an equal liberty. In the present instance some difficulties have resulted, which I shall of course do my best to overcome. If you speak again you will perhaps let it be seen that the field is still open, and the Government unfettered as to its measures for 1884, however we may have endeavoured to appreciate the various considerations bearing upon them. I say 'let it be seen' in contradistinction to anything like a formal announcement.

Believe me always,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

Mr Gladstone appears to have been influenced by complaints from the Whig section that I was endeavouring to force the hands of the Government and to pledge them beforehand to deal with the franchise in 1884. By this time however it had become perfectly evident that they must take this course and the only thing that was in doubt was whether some one or more of the Whigs might resign and refuse to be parties to the legislation. I have no copies of my replies to these two letters nor to the following one December 10 on the same subject.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his letter of December 4 Chamberlain had claimed that at the last Cabinet Gladstone had agreed to Ministers discussing the franchise question and in particular the introduction of a Franchise Bill unaccompanied by a Redistribution Bill in their speeches during the recess, 'provided that we did not expressly commit the Cabinet to a definite and final decision'.

<sup>2</sup> The three letters in question are those of December 4, 8 and 11, 1883. They are among the Gladstone Papers at the British Museum. (Add. MSS. 44125, ff. 209, 213, 218.) In his letter of December 4 Chamberlain claimed that he had Gladstone's consent to discuss the franchise question in public speeches; in that of December 8 he argued that the Government was losing popularity owing to the uncertainty concerning its policy towards the franchise; in that of December 11 he repudiated the suggestion that his speeches were directed against the monarchy.

*Secret*Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

December 10, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

Pray do not suppose that I intended to complain in any way of your construction of the proceedings of the Cabinet. Hartington shared it, though with a different view. Other colleagues, as far as I know, do not. What is perhaps most material is to bear in mind, that no judgment of the Cabinet has been reported to the Queen, and that she has given us no permission to proceed with or announce a Franchise Bill.

As you have further deliverances in prospect, I ought to mention to you, that there is disturbance at headquarters about the original speech, but my attention has not yet been called to particulars, so I am still in the dark.

Were I speaking on the subject of the Franchise I should lay it down that the further strengthening of the popular organ imports no danger whatever to the Monarchy; that the people desire and love the Monarchy; and that assuming, as we may fairly assume, in the personal occupants of the Throne, fidelity and care for its honour, it has nothing to apprehend on the side of the nation either in our time or in the times approaching.

If you are so inclined, you will express yourself much better in this sense, and it would not be without advantage.

On the 14th or 15th we ought to meet in London. Colonial matters do not seem to run very smooth.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

In this last letter it would appear that Mr Gladstone was afraid that the Queen might be offended at the announcement of the intended legislation before her consent to it had been formally asked and given.

On December 17 I spoke to the Junior Liberals at Birmingham, and having regard to Mr Gladstone's suggestion I took the opportunity to refer to the position of the Sovereign and to protest against drawing the Throne into political controversy. I also pointed out that the Queen had never shown herself in



the past unwilling to enlarge the bounds of freedom or to extend the liberty of her subjects.

On December 19 I received the following letter from Mr Gladstone, which raises a new point, namely the language in which I spoke about the House of Lords who were already meditating the rejection of the Franchise Bill when it should come to them from the House of Commons:

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

December 19, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

So far as I can judge you have managed skilfully your reference to the Throne in your speech of the 18th at Birmingham, and I hope it will give satisfaction. But I own my regret at the form of words unexplained as it is, which you employed about the House of Lords, and which I fear may raise a new controversy. I think I understand your meaning, thus namely, that the Lords should not stop the progress of a Franchise Bill; and in this I altogether concur. But those readers who are not predisposed to equitable construction will interpret this as a wider demand, and just objection may be founded upon it. Nothing could be easier than a word of explanation, should you have another opening by letter or otherwise.

Sincerely yours,  
W. E. GLADSTONE

I replied December 21 not being disposed to modify my views about the hereditary legislature.

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
December 21, 1883.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I cannot see my way to alter or qualify anything I have said about the House of Lords. I agree with Mr Bright that a hereditary legislature cannot be a permanent institution in a free country, and if it ever sets itself against the will of the people it

must bend or break. If the Lords throw out a Reform Bill, I think they will provoke a formidable agitation against their present anomalous privileges, and this agitation will have my full sympathy and support.

Unless I am mistaken, Mr Forster spoke in the same sense in the House of Commons, when the Lords threw out one of the Irish Bills, and in the coming contest he will find many imitators and followers.

My loyalty to the Throne is founded on the belief that in this country it is no obstacle to popular progress. I cannot say the same of the House of Lords, whose action has hardly ever been more mischievous than during the last few years when it has been largely responsible for the condition of Ireland.

I shall be sincerely sorry if these views should unfortunately incur your disapproval, but as they are the result of strong conviction, I feel bound to place them frankly before you.

I am,

Yours very sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

The correspondence was closed for the time by Mr Gladstone replying in a letter dated December 22, from which it appeared that my observations about the Throne had had a soothing effect in high quarters.

*Private*

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

December 22, 1883.

My dear Chamberlain,

My suggestion did not, as I meant it, go to altering or qualifying but only to making clear the sense of the words which appeared to me rather to risk misapprehension, or invite misapprehension.

You must be the judge in such a matter: you will forgive me for seeming officious, because my difficulties in keeping things together at this moment are very great and I do not well know what will be the end.

I am however the *less* anxious about this collateral matter because I find that your observations about the Throne appear to have had a good effect.

It is my misfortune to have a very considerable degree of concurrence with your estimate of the legislative performances of the House of Lords and it would not have a savoury effect were I to speak out all I think on that matter. But not being prepared to take any steps I am loath, for myself, to use any language which might be misinterpreted.

You are perfectly correct in your reference to Forster. But his words made a great stir in the Cabinet, although he spoke upon the provocation of an outrageous proceeding actually taken.

In accepting a dessert-service from Derby to-day I have said a few words (not naming the Lords) intended to have a pacifying effect.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] Since I wrote to you last, I have discovered a segment of the Cabinet who hold that at the last sitting *nothing* was decided!

W. E. G.

In December of this year I wrote an article in the *Fortnightly Review* on the Amendment of the Artisans' Dwellings Act and criticizing Lord Salisbury's policy in regard to it.

I also made several speeches with respect to the loss of life at sea and in preparation for proposed legislation intended to diminish it.

1884

In the beginning of the year I paid a visit to Newcastle in support of John Morley and made several speeches. The principal one was a defence of the Government policy in Ireland and Egypt and an earnest appeal for an extension of the franchise.

On another occasion I addressed a large meeting of ship-owners in reference to the loss of life at sea which had taken place especially among ships on the east coast, and I repeated and defended the statements which I had made as to the cause of these losses.

On January 29 I addressed my constituents in the Town Hall, franchise being again the principal subject of my address. By

this time the Government had finally decided to proceed with the extension of the suffrage and had further determined that franchise should be separated from redistribution, that Ireland should have equality of treatment, and that there should not be any tampering with the minority vote.

The Cabinet discussed the question of the existing freehold franchise and Dilke and myself were desirous of abolishing it but Mr Gladstone and the majority were disinclined to disfranchise anyone and refused therefore to interfere with the existing privileges.

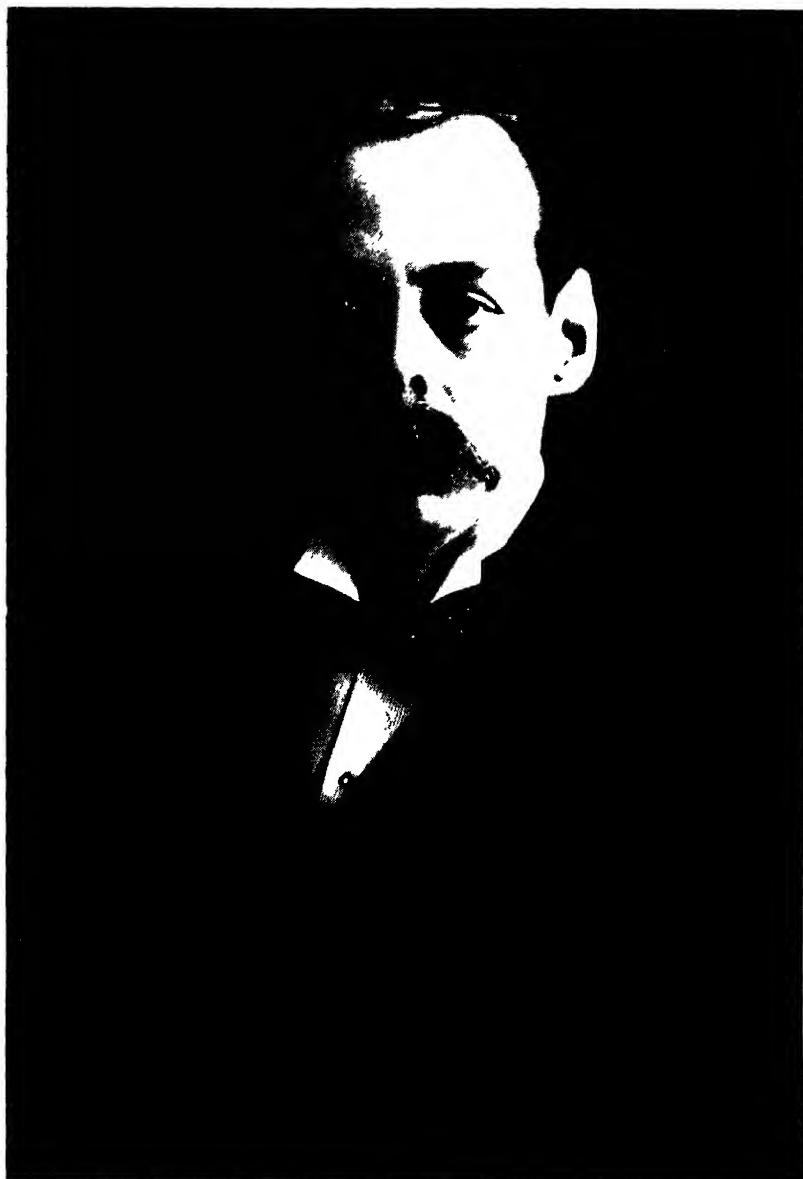
Parliament met on February 5. The Franchise Bill was shortly afterwards introduced and on March 27 I spoke in favour of the Second Reading. In the course of this speech I pointed out that the labourers had suffered owing to being without representation and that in times past they had been robbed of their rights in the common-land, of their open spaces, and of the endowments and charities left for their advantage.

On June 27 the Bill was read a third time in the House of Commons and a few days later was suspended indefinitely in the House of Lords by a hostile amendment moved by Lord Cairns.

The Government decided to prorogue Parliament immediately, and to call a new session in October in order that the Franchise Bill might be reintroduced; and accordingly on August 14 Parliament was prorogued, and the question was remitted for the consideration of the constituencies during the recess.

A powerful agitation now commenced throughout the country in which I took considerable part. The demand for the franchise was accompanied by attacks on the House of Lords and denunciation of their claim to oppose hereditary privilege to the decisions of the representatives of the people. The cry was 'The Peers against the People'. It was my firm belief that the House of Lords would yield only to fear and that unless the agitation was very powerfully supported they would undoubtedly carry out the intention which had already been expressed on their behalf and reject the Bill a second time.

Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill had been pro-



*Elliott and Fry*

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL

1849-95

From a photograph taken in 1886



THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY

1830-1903

ninent among others in sneering at the previous agitation and in asserting that the people at large took no great interest in the question. It was necessary to convince them that they were mistaken; and in order to do this, the key-note of the agitation had to be pitched rather high. The moderate Liberals deprecated all attacks on the House of Lords and the two sections of the party were accordingly once more brought into conflict.

I opened the campaign on July 23 in a speech at a banquet at the Devonshire Club. I referred to the sneers of Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill and pointed out that they were a direct incitement to violence and I asserted in the strongest terms the claims of the House of Commons against the House of Peers.

On July 26 I received the following reminder from Mr Gladstone:

*Private*

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

July 26, 1884.

My dear Chamberlain,

Upon examining your speech with my best spectacles, I find a single passage which I should like to refer to you, as there are a few words in it, those about the 'future prospects' of the House of Lords, which I rather think may have been spoken inadvertently.

I understood you most kindly and frankly to say that you accepted my statement at the Foreign Office as fairly indicating the range of discussion within which we should, at the present stage of the controversy, endeavour to confine ourselves. But certainly a main part of my purpose in that statement was to shut out the point of future prospects. And I hope that when we meet on Monday you may give me a word to assure me that I was not misunderstood.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

On August 4 I spoke at a great demonstration in Bingley Hall.<sup>1</sup> I referred to previous victories of popular agitation and especially

<sup>1</sup> At Birmingham.

to the work of the Political Union in 1832 and in an historical sketch of that time I spoke of the threatened march of 100,000 men from Birmingham to London to encamp in Hyde Park and demonstrate for their rights. I also attacked the pretensions of the House of Lords and said that the divine right of kings was a dangerous delusion but the divine rights of the peers would be a ridiculous absurdity.

On October 7 I spoke at Hanley; and on October 18 and following days I spoke several times in Wales. In the course of one of these speeches I referred to a statement by Lord Salisbury that, if there were a march to London like that which had been threatened in 1832 by my fellow-townsmen, and if I would head the demonstration, I should get my head broken for my pains. In reply I said that I would certainly head the demonstration, if Lord Salisbury would head the Column which was to oppose it, and thought in the conflict I should not come worst off.

On October 6 Mr Gladstone wrote to me as follows: (The reference to compromise was one to a suggestion which was already being made for some arrangement whereby the difficulty could be overcome and the Peers brought to accept the Franchise Bill.)

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

October 6, 1884.

My dear Chamberlain,

I am extremely sorry to have missed seeing you in London; viewing the immense interests that are suspended upon the right course of the Franchise Bill and question.

I see that Salisbury by his declaration in *The Times* of Saturday, that the Lords are to contend for the simultaneous passing of the two Bills, has given you an excellent subject for denunciation, and you may safely denounce him to your heart's content.

But I earnestly hope you will leave us all elbow room on other questions which may arise. If you have seen my letters (virtually) to the Queen,<sup>1</sup> I do not think you will have found reason for

<sup>1</sup> In fact to the Queen's secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby. For this correspondence see P. Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr Gladstone*, ii. 299-305.



alarm in them. I am sorry that Hartington the other day used the word compromise, a word which has never passed my lips though I believe he meant nothing wrong. If we could find anything which, though surrendering nothing substantial, would build a bridge for honourable and moderate men to retreat by I am sure you would not object to it.

But I have a much stronger plea for your reserve than any request of my own. It is this, that the Cabinet has postponed discussing the matter until Wednesday simply in order that you may be present and take your share. They meet at twelve. I shall venture to count on your doing nothing to narrow the ground left open to us; which is indeed but a stinted one.

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

On October 8 Mr Gladstone wrote the following letter, which shows that there was no great difference between us as to the spirit of my speeches.

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.  
October 8, 1884.

My dear Chamberlain,

Having troubled you on Monday with a note of requests, I must now write a line to *thank* you for the skill and moderation with which, according to the Report in *The Times*, you handled yesterday towards the close of your very able speech the subject of so-called compromise.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

On October 21 I received the following letter from Dilke:

Secret

76, Sloane Street.  
October 21, 1884.

My dear Chamberlain,

Mr G. sent for me the moment he reached town to-day. He stated that on October 9 the Queen had telegraphed to him that she was 'shocked' at your then speech, and that he had asked for the particular passages and had defended you, entirely approving

of the speech. He then said that he wished to be entirely loyal to you and to support you firmly with the Queen, *should* she object to your last speech now. But, that for this purpose, he wanted to feel that he was on safe ground. That he much admired your last speeches, but, that the passage about heading the march to fight Salisbury, though provoked by Salisbury's wicked and unjustifiable words, was not, he thought, a passage which could be defended as coming from a Cabinet Minister. He wished to get it qualified in order to be able to defend your speeches as a whole.

He therefore asks (through me as your most intimate friend, in order that the asking may not be formal) that you should qualify the passage.

I said that you were not going to speak. He replied that you might get a Quaker friend to write to you to tell you that some had thought that you advised broken heads; in order that you should declare in a letter, which might be printed with the other, that you were shocked to hear that such an interpretation as that of incitement to violence should be placed on words which were only a fair and obvious reply to Salisbury's monstrous violence.

I did not say so, but I should do this myself.

Ever yours,

CHARLES W. DILKE

[PS]. *Of course*, in any case, I make common cause.

A few days before, the disturbances, known as the Aston Riots, took place on the occasion of a demonstration called by the Conservatives to hear Sir Stafford Northcote and Lord Randolph Churchill. A counter-demonstration was arranged outside the grounds by the Liberals, and the crowd attending the latter meeting broke into the grounds—pulling down the wall—and made the conduct of the meeting altogether impossible. No personal injury, however, was done, although some furniture was smashed.<sup>1</sup>

The new session of Parliament commenced on October 22, and, in the course of the debate on the Address, Lord Randolph moved a vote of censure in connection with the Aston Riots which he accused me of having arranged. He also accused me of

<sup>1</sup> An understatement. (Cp. Garvin, *op. cit.*, i. 477-8.)

having continually incited to violence in the speeches which I had delivered during the autumn. I replied at great length and my action was also defended by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr Gladstone.

On November 4 I spoke briefly on the occasion of the stone-laying at the National Liberal Club.

The agitation had now done its work, and sensible people were getting alarmed as to the prospects of the future if the question of reform were to continue unsettled.

In November Sir Henry Ponsonby called on me at the Board of Trade and said that the Queen desired to know my opinion on the situation. I said that unless the Lords gave way I believed that there would be riots and serious outbreaks in many parts of the Kingdom; and I gave him in confirmation of this opinion some statements which I had heard in the course of the recent campaign from large manufacturers and others well acquainted with the prevailing temper of the working-classes. Sir Henry told me that he had heard the same thing from other quarters.

I believe that about this time the Queen interfered [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> privately with some of the Peers and endeavoured to bring about an arrangement. In any case, communications were opened. Mr Gladstone had an interview with Lord Salisbury; and later on Sir Charles Dilke and others were called in to assist. The broad lines of redistribution were agreed to and, this having been done, Lord Salisbury consented to pass the Franchise Bill at once, leaving the measure of redistribution till next year with the understanding that it would be on the lines then arranged.

On November 12 the Bill passed its Third Reading in the House of Commons. On the 17th the nature of the arrangement arrived at was indicated by Mr Gladstone and on December 5, the Bill passed the House of Lords.

In the first session of this year I introduced the Merchant

<sup>1</sup> The word 'interfered' is apparently used here only in the sense of 'intervened' and not with any pejorative intention. Cp. Chamberlain's use of the word on p. 73.

Shipping Bill<sup>1</sup> after lengthened conferences with the shipowners and an endeavour to secure their assent to its provisions. The opposition of the Trade was, however, exceedingly strong; and telegrams and letters poured in on the House of Commons urging members to reject the Bill. It became evident that it could not be carried without a large expenditure of time and unless the Government would make it a Cabinet question. Having regard to the fact that we were already engaged with the Franchise Bill I could not press for the extended time that was necessary.

On March 9 I wrote as follows to Mr Gladstone:

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

March 9, 1884.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I have carefully considered the situation with regard to the Shipping Bill and beg to submit my views on the subject.

There are some signs that the country is moving slowly in support of the Bill. I have received a number of resolutions and many letters, some of them from Tories.

A large public meeting in London is being promoted and there are other indications of a growing agitation.

I am not sanguine that this movement will be in time to affect the fortunes of the Bill:

I have received the enclosed letter from Mr Gorst<sup>2</sup> and have reason to believe that he will support the proposal to refer to a Grand Committee. I will try to find out on Monday whether any other members of the opposition will take the same line, but I fear the chance of a party victory will be too tempting to be resisted.

I have come to the conclusion that there is practically no hope of a compromise.

The Shipowners want to stave off all legislation, and they do not want to prevent over-insurance. Mr Rathbone, the brother of the M.P. and himself a large Shipowner, told me that he

<sup>1</sup> Intended to protect the lives of seamen in merchant-ships, along the lines suggested by Samuel Plimsoll.

<sup>2</sup> 'Asking whether the Bill will be immediately proceeded with.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)

believed that '90 per cent of Shipowners would make a good thing at the present time by losing their ships'.

In these circumstances there are three courses open:

1. To allow the Bill to be smothered by other business and quietly to withdraw it.

The objections to this are: a. That it will not allow of any statement being made on behalf of the Government and in justification of their proposals: b. That it may be taken as a tacit admission that the Bill is a mistake, and c. That the opponents may still demand and obtain a Select Committee of Enquiry.

2. To surrender to the opposition and to agree to refer the Bill to a Select Committee.

The objections are: a. That legislation will be impossible during the present Session: and b. That we shall be debarred from throwing the blame of delay on our opponents, since we shall have admitted the justice of their claim for enquiry.

There is also the serious political objection to 1 and 2 that the question will remain suspended over the heads of the Shipowners at the General Election and that, in their present frame of mind, they will throw themselves into the arms of the Tories.

3. The last course is the one which commends itself to me personally as the best for the Government, for the Party, and for the question itself.

It is that I should have an early day for the Second Reading and should announce my intention to oppose reference of the Bill to a Select Committee, while ready to give a Committee if desired to enquire into the charges which the Shipowners say I have brought against them. The argument is that whatever may have been the practices under the law, it is universally admitted that the law itself is bad. Therefore no time should be lost in amending the law, the tendency of which is palpable and notorious, whatever its actual results may have been.

I have a very strong case and I think I might be able to keep the majority on our side right. Still, in view of the probable course of the opposition and of the Parnellites, who will vote against the Government, it is probable that I should be defeated.

Thereupon I should ask your permission to resign my office; first, because I am personally responsible for this measure, and there is no reason why the Government as a whole should suffer because I am at variance with the majority of the House of

Commons;—and secondly, because I cannot answer for the administration of the Board of Trade if the House refuses to alter a law which in my heart I believe to be drowning sailors every day.

My resignation would be good for the Party and the Government, because when Jonah has been thrown to the whale, the gale raised by the Shipowners will abate. They will be satisfied with my personal discomfiture and will not visit my sins on my colleagues.

It will also be good for the question at issue. It will be the starting point of an agitation which will justify the Government and pave the way for an early reconsideration of the subject. It will show the importance attached to the proposed amendment of the law and the incident will be a formidable weapon in the hands of Liberal candidates at every Borough election.

As my resignation will be a purely personal affair, it will not entail any others; and especially Dilke would remain in the Cabinet to represent the Radical section. I should myself be ready, from outside, to give the warmest support to the Franchise Bill and other Government measures.

I have convinced myself that the course I propose is the best in the circumstances. I hope I may also convince you, but in any case I hold myself absolutely at your disposition, and with many thanks for all your kindness on every occasion.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Mr Gladstone refused in kind terms to accept my resignation, and on May 19 I moved the Second Reading of the Bill in a speech which occupied nearly four hours and in which I explained in great detail the reasons for the Bill and the nature of the remedies I proposed to apply. The discussion was adjourned, but owing to want of time the Bill was withdrawn at a later period in the Session.

A Royal Commission was afterwards appointed to enquire into the whole subject. After two years it reported in favour of the principle which I desired to establish.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1887.

In July Sir William Harcourt introduced and obtained a Second Reading for his London Government Bill. This Bill had been in preparation for a considerable time. When the first draft was circulated to the Cabinet I prepared a Minute upon it, which was distributed by Harcourt with his answer. The Cabinet of course adopted his view and the Bill accordingly proposed the creation of a single municipality.

The discussion on the Franchise Bill absorbed so much of the time of the House that the London Government Bill was not proceeded with but was withdrawn at the end of the session.

In October, the representations of the Government having proved insufficient to secure the withdrawal of the freebooters who had invaded the territories of the Bechuanaland chiefs under our protection, and Lord Derby proposing to continue negotiations, I circulated the following minute to the Cabinet. I was not present when it was discussed but Dilke informed me that although Harcourt strongly dissented from my views the rest of the Cabinet came over to them, including Lord Derby and Mr Gladstone, and it was resolved to send an expedition.

[*Minute*]

I regret that I am unable to agree with the minute of Lord Derby respecting Bechuanaland.

I have come, most reluctantly, to the conclusion that the limits of patience and forbearance have been reached in this matter, and that the time has come when more decisive steps must be taken.

I understand that Lord Derby proposes to wait until a Session of the Colonial Parliament has been held and has come to a decided conclusion as to the establishment of a Colonial Protectorate over the whole of Bechuanaland.

In my opinion the delay which this course would involve would be utilized by the freebooters to establish themselves in greater force in the territories of Montsioa, and it would also tend definitely to commit the South African Republic to the support of these invaders.

It appears to me that whatever may be the excuses now made by the authorities of the South African Republic there is really

no doubt that they have connived at a flagrant and deliberate breach of the Convention of 1884. It must be borne in mind that this breach follows on a similar disregard of the previous Convention in Pretoria; and I can conceive of no position more humiliating than that of the British Government continually making new treaties as, one after the other, the old ones are violated by the other contracting party.

Whether it was wise, when the Convention of Pretoria was abandoned, to enter into any further relations with the Boers or to undertake any further responsibility in connection with Montsioa may be a question. It is, however, too late to discuss this policy, which was probably demanded by Parliamentary considerations, and to which in any case the Government is clearly pledged. In defending the London Convention the Government definitely undertook the obligation of protecting Montsioa and Mankoroane from further interference. We surrendered to the Boers the control of the territories belonging to Chiefs professedly favourable to them, and we only excepted the lands of those Chiefs who were definitely committed to the British Alliance.

We also fully discussed the question of the trade route, and peremptorily declined to surrender its control to the Boers. These terms have been accepted by the South African Republic; but apparently accepted only with the predetermination to ignore them on the first opportunity.

In addition to these considerations the circumstances attending the attack made by the Boer freebooters on Montsioa, and the alleged murder of Mr Bethell, who appears to have been at the time a British official, call for special enquiry.

It seems to me, on the whole, that we cannot escape the responsibility of enforcing the Convention as against these marauders. We may take the South African Republic at its word and assume that they are not committed either to the acts of the invaders or to the Provisional Protectorate which they have most unwarrantably assumed.

I agree that it is of the utmost importance to secure the co-operation of the Cape Colony, and I should be inclined, therefore, to authorize Sir Hercules Robinson to inform the Government of the Cape Colony that Her Majesty's Government are prepared if they are assured of the hearty co-operation of the



Colony, to maintain the trade route to the interior, and the rights of the Government and of the native tribes under the Convention of London.

I think that the force now in South Africa ought to be immediately strengthened, and that in any expedition which it undertakes it should be accompanied by a Colonial contingent. The object of any operations would be distinctly stated to be the repression of the freebooters, and the restoration of Montsioa.

The Transvaal State should be called upon to assist; but, with or without its help, the duty which we have solemnly and repeatedly undertaken ought to be performed.

If the Cape Government should refuse to give any aid, of course the matter would be open to reconsideration, but this would be in entire contradiction of the terms of the Minute of the 23rd of September in which they say that the Imperial Government will be thoroughly supported by Her Majesty's subjects of every nationality in the Colony.

On November 4 I announced the intention of the Government in the House of Commons and their determination at all risks to carry out the obligations they had come under to the native chiefs.

- On November 13, on the Estimates, I further explained and defended the policy which was completely successful. The expedition restored the chiefs and ensured the observance of the Convention without the loss of a single life. This was probably due to the overwhelming force employed; and although it involved large expenditure it was certainly wiser and cheaper than any intervention could have been which by its weakness would have provoked opposition.

In September, a Cabinet Committee met at the Colonial Office, and we then agreed to take over the protectorate of the Cameroons. Nothing, however, was done by Lord Derby, and some time afterwards the Germans annexed the country.

## CHAPTER V

AS soon as the success of the Reform Bill was assured I began seriously to prepare for the General Election, and especially to frame, with the assistance of other prominent Radicals, a programme for the Liberal Party in the new Parliament. I arranged with Escott, who was then Editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, for the publication of a series of articles on Radical policy and methods. These articles were all arranged with me beforehand and submitted to me in proof before publication. The three first—'Introductory', 'Machinery', and 'Measures' were written by Escott: the 'Housing of the Poor in Towns' by Frank Harris: the 'Agricultural Labourer' by Jesse Collings: 'Religious Equality' by John Morley: 'Free Schools' by Francis Adams, ex-secretary of the National Education League: 'Taxation and Finance' by F. Adams: and 'Local Government' by Escott—so far as Great Britain was concerned—and by Fottrell, an Irish solicitor belonging to the Nationalist Party, in regard to the Irish branch of the subject. In this last article the first public suggestion was made of the scheme of National Councils. The articles appeared from time to time in the *Fortnightly Review* and were subsequently collected and published with a short preface from me in July 1885.<sup>1</sup>

1885

A good deal of my time and attention during this year was taken up with the public discussion of the views put forward in the Radical Programme. The Whig section of the Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> With the title, *The Radical Programme*. In fact the publication of these articles in the *Fortnightly Review* began in 1883, over a year before 'the success of the Reform Bill was assured'.

were hostile or indifferent to anything beyond the most moderate reform. The Local Government Bill prepared by Mr Dodson,<sup>1</sup> which time had prevented us from pressing in Parliament, was according to the view of Dilke and myself a most lamentably inadequate measure. We could obtain no expression of opinion favourable to Free Education or to the increased powers for obtaining land which we desired to give to local authorities. It seemed to me absolutely necessary that these and kindred questions should be publicly raised before the electors were appealed to; and that if possible a Liberal majority should be returned pledged to go further in the direction of social and educational reform than the majority of the existing government were willing to do.

I opened the campaign on January 5 at a working-men's demonstration in the Town Hall, Birmingham. I spoke of the time as being the commencement of a new era. A peaceful revolution had been accomplished and the reign of democracy was about to begin. I pointed out that altered circumstances would require changes in our organization and above all a programme adequate to the aspirations of the millions who would shortly enjoy the franchise. I spoke at some length on foreign policy and the German attempts at colonial extension; and, as regards domestic legislation, I expressed my opinion that in future it would deal more than in the past with social subjects. I claimed that men had natural rights, and referring to the privileges which had been enjoyed, and to some extent abused, by property, I asked, 'What ransom will property pay?' This expression was not perhaps a very happy one, but curiously enough it was borrowed from Mr Goschen, who had used it in a private conversation we had had a few days before on the subject of these social reforms. I went on to say that property had obligations as well as rights and pointed in general terms to the necessity not only of completing the land programme of

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Dodson had been President of the Local Government Board from 1880 to 1882, but does not appear to have prepared any such Bill. On succeeding Dodson in 1882, Dilke was commissioned to prepare a Local Government Bill; Dodson was a member of the Cabinet committee, of which Dilke was chairman, formed to assist in framing the Bill. (*Life of Dilke*, i. 518, ii. 11-14.)

Cobden and Bright but also of adding to it provisions tending to secure the restoration of the labourer to the soil.

On January 14 I attended another meeting at Ipswich where I enlarged and defined my programme. I declared that the interests of rich and poor were not hostile but that the duties of property must be more strictly observed. I spoke in favour of an extension of popular government to the counties, free education, land for the labourers, artisans' dwellings, the rights of the poor in commons and charitable endowments, a revision of taxation, including the consideration of the taxation of ground rents and the contribution of personal property to local rating; revision of the income tax with regard to precarious incomes: reform of the death duties, and graduated taxation. These views were reiterated and enforced by me in later speeches in which I gradually concentrated attention on four points, viz. local government, land for the labourers, free education and a revision of taxation in order that the burdens imposed by the State might more nearly constitute an equality of sacrifice on the part of all the taxpayers. These four points constituted the so-called 'Unauthorized Programme'<sup>1</sup> of 1885 on which about two-thirds of the Liberal Party fought the election in that year, the remainder adhering to Mr Gladstone's much more limited manifesto.

The discussion in the country was carried on chiefly by myself, on the one hand, with assistance from Jesse Collings, and to some extent from Dilke and Morley; and the opposition was led by Hartington and Goschen, and especially by the latter.

<sup>1</sup> This statement is rather misleading. The phrase 'unauthorized programme' was coined by Goschen in a speech on October 14, 1885, to distinguish certain proposals put forward by Chamberlain from the 'authorized' Liberal Party programme formulated by Gladstone in his address to the electors of Midlothian. The proposals in question, the exclusion of which from the Liberal programme would, declared Chamberlain on September 24 in a speech at Lambeth, render it impossible for him to take office, were: 'free schools', and the conferment on local authorities of powers for the compulsory purchase of land to create small-holdings—a proposal known popularly as 'three acres and a cow'. Neither of the other two points mentioned here by Chamberlain can really be regarded as 'unauthorized'. The reform of local government was specifically advocated in Gladstone's address, and the passage in that address dealing with taxation was recognized by Chamberlain in his Lambeth speech as 'satisfactory'.

On January 29, at the meeting of constituents in the Town Hall, I repeated my views, arguing chiefly for the readjustment of taxation and the multiplication of small owners and tenants.

On January 31 Mr Gladstone wrote to me enclosing a complaint which Lord Richard Grosvenor had received from Mr Foljambe, a Whig member, calling attention to my Ipswich speech and enquiring if I had expressed the sentiments of the Cabinet. Mr Gladstone said that similar representations had reached him from other quarters and he went on to say:

It rarely happens, even in less anxious and busy times, that members of the Cabinet find themselves tempted to go so far afield into political questions not proximate, as your abundant store of energy and vigorous period of life have enabled and induced you to do.

You would not be insensible to the risk that other members of the Cabinet, exercising an abstract right in the opposite direction, might feel that silence would be interpreted as consent, and might deliver some opinions contradictory to yours: or again that, as will probably occur, there should be comment in Parliament on the subject, such as to require notice. The consequence of such divarications is discredit *pro tanto* to the Government and the weakness which ought to wait upon discredit.

I replied to this letter, February 3, and the following correspondence took place:

Secret

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
February 3, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I have received your letter of the 31st instant with its enclosures.

In his communication of the 15 January Mr Foljambe has detached from their context a few words in one of my speeches, and has founded on them what I should have thought was an obvious misrepresentation of my meaning.

I am unwilling however to offer any explanation to a gentleman who has already published an insulting letter on the subject of my

alleged views, in which he has indulged in imputations of a personal and intentionally offensive nature. Mr. Foljambe represents the prejudice and intolerance of a limited section of the Liberal party who claim, as the price of their support, not only to moderate and restrain the action of the majority but even to silence its voice.

While hoping that you will not think it necessary for me to answer charges so preferred and from such a quarter, I am fully sensible to the consideration which is due to any opinions expressed by my colleagues, and above all by yourself whose authority and experience I recognize with unqualified respect.

I can say truly that had it been possible for me to submit to you beforehand the speeches that I have recently delivered, I would have readily cancelled any part of them of which you disapproved or which you might have thought calculated to cause embarrassment to the Government.

I should have done this the more readily because I know that you would make allowance for the more advanced section of a mixed Government, who are in the position of continually accepting and supporting a policy which does not fully satisfy their sense of justice and which is often inconsistent with their previously declared opinions.

I ought, I think, to add that although any previous concert was of course impossible, yet that I was present at the Cabinet held immediately after the speech to which Mr Foljambe alludes, when I met all my Colleagues except yourself and Lord Spencer. No complaint or objection was made by anyone on that occasion.

I notice what you say as to the possibility that other members of the Government might feel it their duty to express views opposed to those which I have presented, but I may remind you that such a discussion has on several occasions been invited by other members of the Cabinet, and notably by Lord Hartington who announced opinions both on the Irish question and on the Franchise to which Sir Charles Dilke and myself are diametrically opposed, and which, I believe, were not shared by a majority of the Cabinet.

I will not however attempt to base any justification on this example. I have proceeded on the assumption that with regard to questions of the future, which were not immediately before the constituencies but which were properly matters for discussion,



SIR CHARLES DILKE  
1843-1911



*Picture Post Library*

JOHN MORLEY  
1838-1923



*Picture Post Library*

THE MARQUESS OF HARTINGTON  
(afterwards 8th Duke of Devonshire)

1833-1908



*Picture Post Library*

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

1827-1904



each Minister was free to express an individual opinion without committing his colleagues or the Government to its acceptance. On the other hand in regard to questions which form part of the Government Programme, or which have been matters of discussion and argument in the Cabinet, I have always endeavoured, to the best of my ability, loyally and without reserve, to defend the conclusions arrived at.

If I have erred in this interpretation of my liberties, I much regret the involuntary mistake, and should be glad in this case to know how far you regard it as seriously embarrassing to the Government and what course you would wish me now to pursue.

I have long felt the grave difficulty of reconciling the objects I have most at heart and the promotion of Radical opinions with a continuance of official responsibility under present conditions; and it may well be that I should best serve the cause I have espoused, and at the same time relieve you from some of the anxieties of the situation by resuming an independent position.

I can only say that if I am left to decide this question, I should be chiefly guided by my desire to do whatever you may think best for the Government and least likely to add to your cares.

As Sir Charles Dilke is mentioned in Mr Foljambe's letter I have shown the correspondence to him.

I am, my dear Mr Gladstone,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Holker Hall,<sup>1</sup>

Carke-in-Cartmel,

Carnforth.

February 5, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

I think that after all which has passed a conversation in the Cabinet, when an opportunity offers, will be the best means of enabling you to estimate your personal situation: the matter being one of common interest to all our colleagues. But that need not prevent me individually from stating what occurs to me upon it, and my first duty is to thank you for the kind and friendly terms towards myself in which you write.

<sup>1</sup> Hartington's country house.

I understand you to hold that as your opinions and those of Dilke are but partially represented, and sometimes even contravened, by the action of the Government, you conceive that you may properly seek some compensation for sacrifices thus made, or defend yourself against misapprehension thus brought about, by giving your own unrestrained opinions on questions of the future.

I do not go so far as to meet this proposition, or rather this opinion (which I have endeavoured to put into general terms only) by an absolute assertion of its opposite, but I think it cannot safely be admitted as a practical guide.

Every Liberal Government from and since that of Lord Aberdeen has had one or more Radical members in it who have sat as representative men. But these gentlemen, Molesworth, Gibson, Bright, Stansfield [*sic*], have not found it necessary to sustain their character as Ministers, as a general rule (and the exceptions have I think been very rare) by drawing on the future and opening up questions not in immediate reach with a view to sustaining faith out of doors in the integrity of their principles.

Further, a liberty of this kind cannot be confined to any particular Minister or section. And if there is a title for those who wish to pass beyond the line of action marked by the Government to deliver strong popular enunciations on these extraneous matters, those, on the other hand, who have strained themselves to keep up with the Government must be equally free to seek a similar compensation. There would thus be opened a wide field of contradictions, required by no practical purpose, and tending to trouble over-burdened men with needless controversies, and to estrange from them that confidence without which they cannot carry on their work.

It is certainly true that from time to time a Minister may on some question lying nearer hand embarrass his colleagues by some premature or one-sided declaration of opinion. More or less of inconvenience always follows. But the discussion of these proximate questions cannot always be avoided, and an occasional mistake in the manner of doing it is not quite the same thing as the opening of new chapters of contested matter with regard to which no practical issue is depending.

These are general considerations to which I am sure you will allow such weight as they deserve.

With respect to the present case, I feel individually a great anxiety that nothing should be done to disturb in any way our united action at the present moment, for reasons over and above those which would always prompt and warrant such a feeling. We have placed ourselves in a very peculiar position in respect to the Seats Bill, and our covenant to try our best towards passing it imposes on us peculiar obligations, now that its provisions have been made the subject of an honourable accord. Differences may at any time be forced upon the members of a Cabinet, but I should be deeply grieved if anything like a self-sought cause of difference were now to cause any difficulties among us. It is a very high duty at the moment to complete that important work of domestic [ ]<sup>1</sup> in which we have advanced far and prosperously, and to which, by moderation and by loyal adhesion I am bound to add that you and Dilke have so largely contributed.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

Highbury,

Moor Green,

Birmingham.

February 7, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I have to thank you for your very kind letter of the 5th instant which I have read with the most careful attention. I shall gladly avail myself of any opportunity of learning the opinion of the Cabinet generally on the subject of your correspondence, but, in the meantime, I trust I may be permitted to submit some further observations which I have prepared after consultation with Sir Charles Dilke and which express our joint view of the situation.

The liberty of stating personal opinions to be allowed to individual ministers has of course never been strictly defined, but I was under the impression that considerable latitude has been claimed in the past, on special occasions; and I gather from your letter that your own experience includes such precedents although they have been of exceptional occurrence.

Be this as it may, I think you will agree that the great political reforms recently accomplished and those still in progress, con-

<sup>1</sup> Word omitted in MS. of Gladstone's letter.

stitute changes in the conditions which make the customs of the past no absolute guide for present practice.

Popular government is inconsistent with the reticence which official etiquette formerly imposed on speakers, and which was easily borne as long as the electorate was a comparatively small and privileged class, and the necessity of consulting it at meetings infrequent and limited.

Now, the Platform has become one of the most powerful and indispensable instruments of Government, and any Ministry which neglected the opportunities afforded by it would speedily lose the confidence of the People. A new public duty and personal labour has thus come into existence, which devolves to a great extent and as a matter of necessity, on those members of a Government who may be considered specially to represent the majority who are to be appealed to: and this duty cannot be performed at all if the men on whom it falls are to be confined within the narrow limits of a purely official programme.

The legislative work of a Liberal Administration is always decided by the maximum which the Moderate section is ready to concede, and the minimum which the Advanced party will consent to accept. It is recommended to the constituents of the former as the least which it is imperative to grant; while it must be defended by the representatives of the latter as an instalment of the full measure of justice which may some day be hoped for.

I have made these observations in order to point out that I do not plead for a certain latitude and independence in the personal interest of individual ministers, but because it is the condition of their influence and consequent usefulness to the Government of which they form part.

I cannot help thinking that your unexampled opportunities of knowledge will furnish some instances of ministers, who have been invited as special representatives of certain sections of the Party, but who have so completely sunk their individuality after accepting office that they may almost be said to have lost their claims to consideration.

I do not wish to strain this argument unduly, and I certainly do not presume to ask for unrestricted liberty on every question of the future outside the immediate scope of the Government programme. I think that in my desire to be brief I may have stated the principle for which I contend too absolutely in my previous

letter; and having attentively read the propositions stated in your answer I am not prepared to contest their general justice and expediency. I admit that no minister has a right to advocate opinions which are contrary to any principle laid down or acted upon by the Government as a whole; and I will go further and say that he should endeavour to avoid raising questions which might place his Colleagues under the absolute necessity of repudiating his conclusions.

In making these admissions, I hope that I may have placed myself in accord with you on the question of principle, and that it only remains to consider how far, in recent speeches, I may have exceeded these limitations.

As I do not know what passages may have been the subject of objection, I can only offer some general remarks on this head.

In the first place I should like to point out that the circumstances of the time are altogether exceptional. We are within sight of a General Election when, for the first time, two millions of men, hitherto without representation, will be called upon to exercise their political rights; and it is of great importance that these vast masses of people, who have been watching with interest and enthusiasm the efforts for their enfranchisement should be assured that their interests are a constant object of concern to the Liberal Party and the Liberal Government.

Reform is not an end in itself but only the means to an end, and although during the struggle for the Franchise it might have been desirable to avoid reference to any question which could prejudice the main issue, it seems to me that, now that this is assured, it is both proper and expedient that some message of practical sympathy and goodwill should be conveyed to the new electors in the Counties and to the same class in the Boroughs, who will in the future form the great majority of our supporters.

Starting with the proposition that the obligations as well as the rights of Property must be strictly enforced, I argued that the Community as a whole owed to its poorer members something more in the way of social legislation than it had already conceded in the Poor Law and the Education Act. I urged that the incidence of taxation still bore unequally on the working classes and that the burden should be in proportion to the means of the taxpayer. I also argued in favour of some practical attempt to multiply small owners and tenants.

These were the principal propositions of the speeches delivered at Birmingham and Ipswich; and I fail to see anything in them inconsistent with the principles professed by the least advanced of Liberals.

I find, for instance, Mr. Goschen at Edinburgh, declaring the greatest happiness of the greatest number to be the peculiar object of Liberal policy, and advocating in particular as one of the applications of the general doctrine the multiplication of small freeholders. He expressed disapproval of the methods suggested in my speeches, but I note a remarkable passage in which he says that 'in view of proposals for State Socialism he thinks it wiser to extend the functions of the Local Authorities in order to entrust to them the work which cannot be safely performed by the State'. This completely covers my main suggestion, which was that the Local Authorities should have power to purchase land and expend money in connection with the creation of occupying ownerships and allotments;—and I may add that this proposal, which has been described as confiscating the landlords' property and as the plunder of a class, is exactly paralleled by the Irish Labourers' Act of last session passed by the present Government.

It is indeed not generally known that under an Act of 1851, most of the districts of England are already able to acquire houses, and land and to build houses for the purpose of housing the working classes, and it is understood that the Royal Commission, presided over by Sir Charles Dilke, of which Mr Goschen is himself a member, is likely unanimously to advise that these provisions, which have been, from defects in the machinery of the Act, a dead-letter, shall be amended and extended, and that power to attach plots of land to workmen's dwellings shall be given to the Local Authority.<sup>1</sup>

There are other proposals referred to by me to which exception may be taken, and on which difference of opinion exists, and I may give, as an illustration, the suggestion of a graduated Income Tax. But these were only stated as suggestions and as matter of individual opinion. They were given as examples of what might be done to carry out the objects for which all Liberals might be expected to contend. They were, in fact, 'pious opinions', and not

<sup>1</sup> The whole of this paragraph was added to Chamberlain's draft of the letter by Dilke in his own hand-writing. He also made several other minor amendments clarifying but not changing, the sense of the letter.

items in a Programme to which any member of the Party was asked to pledge himself.

Without wearying you with further details, I will only say, in conclusion, that I believe the greater part of the outcry against these speeches is raised by persons who have not done me the honour of reading them, and who have formed their opinion of their scope and tenor from the gross exaggerations and wilful perversion of certain organs of the Press—never very friendly to H.M. Government, and particularly hostile to the views of the advanced section in it.

Other Liberals, less prejudiced and with fuller knowledge, have seen no cause of alarm or disgust in them. I might mention among these Lord Carrington, who is no inconsiderable land-owner and whose whole ordinary income is derived from land and who wrote to me yesterday to say: 'I most heartily agree with your Ipswich speech and think that we now have for the first time a programme to work upon.'

Without venturing to accept this opinion as final, I think it has at any rate more value and importance than the silly and intolerant criticisms of Mr Foljambe.

I apologize sincerely for troubling you with so long a letter, but I am emboldened by your past kindness to lay before you a full statement of the views which have hitherto governed the course of Sir Charles Dilke and myself as members of your Administration.

I am, my dear Mr Gladstone,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

On April 28, I spoke again at the Eighty Club, replying to a speech previously delivered to the same audience by Mr Goschen.

On June 3 I accepted the invitation of the Liberal Council of the Western Division<sup>1</sup> to stand as their candidate at the next election. On this occasion I spoke chiefly about foreign policy and especially our relations with France in Egypt.

On June 13, the Government having resigned a day or two previously,<sup>2</sup> I spoke at the Cobden Club dinner. I described the new government as the 'stop-gap government' and spoke

<sup>1</sup> Of Birmingham.

<sup>2</sup> June 9, 1885.

strongly in favour of local government as a national as well as a parochial question and advocated a large measure of devolution. I rejoiced that owing to the change of government the hands of Sir Charles Dilke and myself would now be free to advocate the cause of freedom and justice. This was an allusion to the scheme of National Councils the rejection of which by the Cabinet had indirectly caused the fall of the government.<sup>1</sup>

On June 17 I spoke at Islington and criticized the proceedings of the new government. I again advocated local government for Ireland and a reform of the centralized and bureaucratic system in that country.

Shortly afterwards a question was put in the House by a Conservative member in which it was imputed that I had compared the recent government of Ireland by Lord Spencer to the government of Poland by Russia and Venice by Austria. I explained in reply that my comparison was confined to the bureaucratic character of the government both in Ireland and in the countries to which I referred and not to its general policy or methods.

On July 24 I spoke at Hackney and next day Lord Spencer wrote:

I must write to you a few lines to thank you cordially for the very generous way in which you spoke of me and my Irish work in your speech of last night.

It is very gratifying to me and altogether satisfactory as it removes ideas which the public held that you disapproved of all I had done.

My failings are generously looked over, but I know they exist, and I cannot expect my colleagues to agree with all we had to do,

<sup>1</sup> This statement somewhat exaggerates the importance of the rejection of the 'national council' scheme by the Cabinet on May 9, 1885, as the cause of the resignation of the Government a month later, after a defeat on the Budget. The 'national council' scheme had been designed as a means of securing an easy passage for a new Crimes Bill. Its rejection by the Cabinet left unsolved the problem of the Crimes Bill, the details of which had still not been settled when the Government finally resigned. Many letters in the Chamberlain, Gladstone and Dilke Papers make clear the concern felt by Liberals at the decision to continue even a limited policy of coercion. There was, on the other hand, not much concern for the abortive 'national council' proposal.



but your words were as generous as any words can be, and I thank you very much for them.

On August 5 I spoke at several meetings at Hull. In the principal speech I advocated the four points of the Unauthorized Programme and on a second occasion I spoke at length on the defeat of the Shipping Bill and the condition of our sailors.

On September 8 at a meeting at Warrington I referred to a recent speech by Mr Parnell who had said that he demanded a separate and independent Parliament, and that he expected that Whig and Tory would vie with one another to help him to a settlement on his own terms. I said: 'Speaking for myself, I say, that if these, and these alone, are the terms on which Mr Parnell's support is to be obtained I will not enter into competition for it.' This statement was received by the meeting with the greatest enthusiasm—the whole audience rising and cheering.

In the same speech I referred to Hartington's objections and compared him to Rip Van Winkle. I also spoke in great detail in favour of free education.

On September 9 Mr Gladstone wrote as follows:

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

September 9, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

I suppose we have all of us our difficulties and I am fighting with my own. The question for me is between cutting out, which I personally much desire, and which I am free to do, or on the other hand going through the Election, with a view to render to the party such service as I can in helping to maintain its unity, which I desire to see maintained for two very special reasons. 1. Only the Liberal party can (*if it can*) cope with the great Irish question which may arise three months hence. 2. Because of the demoralized and dangerous condition of the Tory party, with R. Churchill in its bosom and to a great extent in its Leadership.

I have prepared with much labour and anxiety such an Address as I might issue if I ask for re-election. In this it is my duty, and my

desire, to avoid collision with either wing of the party. But I can and shall only do this if I believe it to be really desired by the representative men. Hartington has urged me to do it. I wish to know your view upon the point if you will kindly give it me.

I have seen R. Grosvenor, and am in communication with Rosebery. I write after having read your telling speech at Warrington and where I differ should proceed as above described. I think it will be well for me frankly to introduce your name and to explain our relations.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] You will doubtless speak for Dilke.

I replied:

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
September 10, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I am much obliged by your letter of the 9th instant and I rejoice that your health is so far re-established that you are able to contemplate the continued leadership of the Liberal party.

I have no doubt that the announcement of your decision to this effect will be hailed with the greatest satisfaction throughout the country and will conduce more than anything else to that unity which you so much desire.

At the same time, I think I ought not to conceal from you my serious fear that common action between the different sections of the party will be impossible unless Lord Hartington and his friends advance considerably from the position taken up by him in his recent speech at Waterfoot. I am convinced that any attempt to restrict the programme of the party to the questions mentioned by him would be fatal to our success. I have carefully discussed the subject with Dilke, who is staying with me here, and who agrees in my conclusion. He is persuaded that the scheme of Local Government which was prepared for the late Cabinet is no longer adequate to the demands of the situation, and he considers it essential that it should be extended—

1st. By providing for some kind of organization of the parish in the interest of local life and with a view to the political education of the agricultural labourers.

2ndly. By the concession to the new local authorities of compulsory powers for the acquisition of land and for the creation of small holdings, and

3rdly. By handing over to the same authorities the control of local charitable and educational endowments.

We are agreed that it would be impossible for us to join any future Administration which would not concede these points, and also be prepared to accept the principle of free education.

I have closely followed the speeches and addresses of candidates to the new constituencies, and I am convinced that the great majority of Liberal members will come to the new Parliament pledged on these two [*sic*] points. Even among the Tories there is a great movement in the same direction. Here in Worcestershire every one of the Liberal candidates has made both of these questions prominent in his speeches, while Sir Edmund Lechmere, M.P. and Sir Richard Temple, on the Conservative side, have both found themselves compelled to advance beyond their earlier utterances and to pledge themselves to legislation for the purpose of securing to the labourers decent cottages and allotments of one acre of land.

I have also observed that representative Whig landlords like Novar and Sir Kenneth Mackenzie have committed themselves in Scotland to the proposed extension of the powers and functions of local authorities, and I am convinced that only in this way can the Crofters difficulty, which as you are aware has assumed increasing magnitude, be satisfactorily settled. I notice also as a significant sign, that the *Scotsman* newspaper has at last adopted free education as one point in the Liberal programme for Scotland, and I have reason to believe that the great majority of Scotch members will likewise accept it.

I do not quite comprehend the concluding paragraph of your letter. You say that where you differ from me, you would proceed 'as above described', which I understand to mean that you would endeavour to avoid collision with either wing of the party. But you add that you think it will be well for you frankly to introduce my name, and to explain our relations. If this means

that you would feel it necessary to point out the exact character of any difference which may exist, I should greatly fear that such a course would necessitate something in the nature of a reply and would apparently bring the leaders of the Radical section into conflict with yourself, a position which I should most seriously deprecate. Hitherto any discussion has been between subordinate members of the Liberal party, who are recognized as representing different shades of opinion, but neither Lord Hartington nor myself have appeared at any time in opposition to any declaration of yours. I should most earnestly desire at all times to avoid the possibility of having to adopt such a position.

I trust that you will forgive me for putting my views frankly before you and that you will kindly afford me some further explanation as to your present intentions.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

*Secret*

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

September 11, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

I. I think your letter is written under a misapprehension as to my present posture and aim. It gives me the idea that you think I am endeavouring to frame a political programme or plan for a Liberal Government. It is not so. I believe it to be premature. And I am certain that it is for me at this moment impossible. All my purpose, and this I find hard enough to execute, is to learn two things.

(1) Whether I can shape a reasonable and moderate plan of what may be termed roundly essentials in domestic Government for the party, wherewith to go through the general election: leaving it open to others to add what they may think proper to these essentials.

Granville says, and I entirely agree with him, that what we have now to do with is the Dissolution. The experience of the election will enlarge our knowledge. It will tell us absolutely whether the Tories are to go to the wall, and it will show us, from Ireland and elsewhere, more clearly than we see them now, the proper conditions of a Liberal Government.

With much consideration and labour I have, in substance, framed a long paper, which I think answers to these conditions, and in which I carefully avoid committing any other person in *any* degree beyond the imminence of four subjects, which I try to treat in a manner which no real Liberal would object to without tightly drawing the lines; nor even on these do I speak except for myself. They are: Procedure, Local Government (including liquor laws), Land and Registration, i.e. supplemental provisions to the Reform Act.

(2) On the basis thus declared, I want to know secondly whether it is wished that I should go forward, or retire. This question I can only put to few in correspondence: I put it specifically to you Hartington and Granville. I have Granville's yes, founded I think on confidence.

II. I understand you (*vos*) in your letter, and in your speech to lay down certain propositions which you think essential to a Liberal Government, and as to which you also think it essential that they should not now be shut out from any basis laid down for the Election. If my view is right, what you have said places no insurmountable barrier in my way.

III. I regret to have alarmed you most needlessly about the naming. It has no relation to any subject of differences; but it is in connection with defensive remarks on the general structure and working of the party, which I endeavour to justify.

What I have said will I hope *clear* the ground which I opened in my last letter.

IV. Should I not receive affirmative replies to my enquiry (2), it will perhaps remain for me to consider whether I can put forth my address, not abating any of its cautions but stating expressly that I speak for myself alone—or whether for me the end has come.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] I sorrowfully agree in your view of the present aspect of the Irish Question; but on the whole I shed tears over the grave of the Central Board, and am extremely unsanguine as to a legislative settlement.

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
September 12, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I am very much obliged to you for your further letter, which I have shown to Dilke and carefully considered with him.

On the main point in your enquiry we have not the least hesitation. We earnestly desire that you may see your way to continue at the head of the Liberal party and to lead us to victory in the ensuing elections.

If anything were to deprive us of your guidance I can hardly doubt that the most serious divergencies would show themselves and success, for some time to come, would be more than problematical.

We are most anxious to agree with you on every point of your proposed address. At the same time we feel that the exclusion of any subject which we consider essential, unless accompanied by the clearest qualifications, will be accepted by public opinion as committing you to an opposite opinion.

Thus I gather that you would probably not refer in any way to the question of Free Schools, although it is a subject which is daily becoming of greater importance, especially in Scotland.

In dealing with Local Government I presume that you would not think it necessary in any way to shut the door on the proposals which we have made with regard to an extension of authority for the purpose of the compulsory acquisition of land for small tenancies, and in this case I hope we should have no difficulty in fully accepting your statement.

My most serious apprehension is however with regard to the third point in your programme, that, namely, in which you propose to deal with the land question.

It is unfortunately impossible in this connection to put entirely out of view Hartington's recent speech at Waterfoot which was elaborately contrived to emphasize the difference of opinion that unfortunately prevails. If, after this speech, you were to repeat categorically the points of Hartington's programme without any favourable reference to the additions which we are anxious to make to it your declaration would be universally received as a slap in the face to us, and a final acceptance of Hartington's position.

While stating thus plainly the nature of my fears, I feel that these might be entirely dispelled by the actual terms of your address and by the qualifications and comments which you may be intending to employ. I would therefore beg to suggest that you would kindly allow us to see the form which this part of your statement will assume, in order that we may be able to express a definite opinion on this most critical question. I am very sanguine that by this course the difficulties of the situation may be avoided; and to this object I can assure you that we will bring our heartiest goodwill.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

[PS.] I am off to Scotland at the beginning of the week and there may be some delay in my letters. I return here next Saturday.

*Secret*

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

September 14, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

Many thanks for your letter of the 12th, which only reached me this morning. I do not think any matter of difficulty remains.

1. On consideration, as my naming you though in a defensive manner would be unusual, I have thought it on the whole better to treat of co-operation among the several sections of the party without naming names.

2. I have named free education along with House of Lords and State Church, as subjects which I do not find in a state to be brought into the programme for the Dissolution that programme being a political minimum on which I assume that, with some freedom as to details, we are all agreed (in this I take Procedure, Local Government, Land, and Registration only). After so much has been said on Free or rather gratuitous Education I could not be altogether silent, but I have expressly reserved my own final opinion on it, and treated it as a subject having *pros* and *cons*.

3. On Local Government I have named the great objects immediately in view and said further questions may arise as to the attributions and purposes.

4. On Land, according to your request, I send you what I propose. I have striven very hard to be perfectly fair as between you and Hartington, confining my affirmations to what I suppose the entire bulk of the party to be agreed on.

5. I also send my short bit on Registration, in order that, if it contain any phrase which should be altered, you or Dilke may kindly point it out.

I had neither space nor knowledge to warrant details. If you find anything *positively* wrong in it, kindly send a line to-morrow to my son Herbert, Liberal Registration Office, 41 Parliament Street. Of course I am anxious now to get forward.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] In writing all the parts of the Address which directly touched your questions, I have borne carefully in mind the language of your recent speech as to the footing which you claimed for them.

### *Extract*

## XI. Land

The next of the important subjects which I have presumed to name is the reform of the laws relating to land.

I shall treat it as I have treated Local Government, without any attempt to embrace all the topics which may be usefully and legitimately raised in regard to it. I shall only touch on those parts of the question which I hope may be found mature for very early handling by the Liberal party. Belonging to a school which has much faith in economic laws, I disapprove of interfering with them by entails, to which I am still more opposed on social and moral grounds. My desire is both to maintain freedom of bequest and to establish freedom of possession as our future system: and also to deal freely with the transfer of land, the registration of land, the taxation of land during life, and upon death, and the custom of primogeniture as it now exists in cases of intestacy. I shall rejoice if the means thus provided, or other means in themselves commendable, shall lead to a close connection between the nation and the soil through a large extension in the number of those



directly interested in its possession and its produce, but most of all in the proprietorship of their own dwellings.

The balance of taxation as between movable and immovable property, and still more as between property and labour, should be carefully watched, and should be adjusted when occasion offers, with a scrupulousness, which has unhappily been too little observed when property had the absolute command of Parliamentary action. But as to the fundamental principles which make property secure, they will, I believe, be upheld among us in the near or the more distant future with the same courage and integrity as will our liberties, of which, indeed, they form an essential part.

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
September 20, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

Your letter of the 14th reached me as I was starting for Scotland and since then I have not had a minute's spare time. I returned by the night train from Inverness and reached Birmingham at 6 a.m. to-day.

As the Manifesto has in the meantime been published it is unnecessary that I should offer any observations on particular passages.

I fear that it has been generally accepted as a blow to the Radical party and a complete acceptance of the insufficient programme put forward by Lord Hartington at Waterfoot. I have received many complaints from representatives of the advanced section.

You will have seen by my remarks at Inverness that I am anxious to preserve the union of the Party in view of the General Election. I am above all things desirous to avoid the injury to the interests of the country, which would result from a lengthened tenure of office by the Tories.

But if, as I hope and trust, the Liberal party secure a great majority, my work will have been done, and it will only remain for me to offer a loyal support, as far as possible, to any Government that may be formed.

I should consider myself personally dishonoured, if I joined any administration formed on the narrow basis of the Programme

now presented, and which appears to exclude from practical and immediate consideration every proposal which I have recently advocated.

Dilke has left me and is now in France, but from a letter I have since received from him, I am justified in saying that he shares my views.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

September 22, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

Were I engaged (which Heaven forbend) in the formation of a new Liberal Government and were your letter of yesterday an answer to some invitation to join it, then I should have read the letter with great regret.

But I pointed out to you (as I think) in a previous letter that it would (as far as I could judge) be an entire mistake to lay down a *Credo* of Liberal policy for a new Government at the present juncture.

You and Hartington were both demurring in opposite senses, and I made to each the same reply.

My aim was for the Election only, in giving form to my Address. As to what lies beyond, I suppose the party will, as far as it has a choice, set first about the matters on which it is agreed. But no one is bound to this proposition.

Bright once said with much force and sense that the average opinion of the party ought to be the rule of immediate action.

It is likely that there may be a split in the far or middle distance; but I shall have nothing to do with it, and you I am sure do not wish to anticipate it or force it on.

What I have said may I hope mitigate any regret such as you seem to intimate.

I am at present busy on private affairs and papers, to which for six years past I have hardly given one continuous hour. Later on, I should like much to explain to you my personal views and intentions in conversation. It would be difficult to do in writing. They turn very much upon Ireland, the one *Imperial* question

that seems at present possible to be brought into immediate view. But for Liberals generally I should have thought there was work enough for three or four years on which they might all agree.

So far as my observation and correspondence go, I have not found that non-Whig opinion is offended.

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] A letter received from Dilke speaks pleasingly about the Address.

I may say I was quite unconscious of interfering with your present view which I understood to be that none of your 'advanced' proposals were to be excluded but all left open for discussion.

W. E. G.

Highbury,

Moor Green,

Birmingham.

September 23, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I thank you for your letter. I believe we are quite agreed as to the duty of postponing as long as possible differences which may hereafter prove inevitable. I will only add that I do not entertain the personal ambitions which some persons attribute to me and that when the time comes for a decision I shall be quite as ready to fall back into the ranks as to continue in any prominent position.

I shall feel honoured at any time to hear the expression of your views on the Irish or other public questions.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

I sent, on October 24, a list of Scotch members who were reported to me as pledged to free education. In reply I received the following:

Hawarden Castle,

Chester.

October 25, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

I return the Free Education List with thanks. It is curious. But

on the other side, Rigg, whom you thought rather 'small beer' has been followed by a weightier authority, Illingworth, who, if I understand him right

1. Is not opposed to you in principle.
2. Thinks (as I do) that the proposal involves a strong interference with the voluntary schools.
3. Deems an attempt at such interference premature and inexpedient.

An instinct blindly impresses me with the likelihood that Ireland may shoulder aside everything else.

But I would beg you to revolve much in your mind the policy and duty, without me as well as with me, of keeping together the Liberal Party till its list of agreed subjects is exhausted 'or thereby' (I am rubbing up my Scotch).

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

[PS.] Bright has been here—in excellent force and temper.

I had almost forgot to thank you for my little bit of Socialism. I remember it well: and the old Duke of Newcastle (a high Tory, but a great gentleman) smelt a rat and asked me (1832) what I meant. I do not recollect my reply. Probably rather lame.

The 'bit of Socialism' to which he refers was an extract from a speech of his in favour of allotments for the labourers made when he was a candidate for Parliament in 1832.

On October 26, I replied:

As regards Free Schools, I entirely accept your view as to the importance of Illingworth's opposition. It is not numerically great but it represents the most active section of Nonconformists. I hope to be able to modify or even to avert it, but, in any case, all I ask for myself in this matter is full permission to express my own opinion by vote and speech.

As regards acquisition of land by municipal authorities, I should be ready to discuss details with Hartington James Harcourt and Dilke, and think we ought to come to an agreement. But unless the principle is accepted and some provision of the kind introduced into the Local Government Bill neither I, nor Dilke nor Morley—nor I *think* Lefevre—could honestly join any Government. We are absolutely bound by our declarations, as well as

by the general course of our recent action in such a case to remain outside and bide our time. Considering that our proposal is not new—that it is on the lines of much recent legislation—that it has been accepted by the majority of Liberal candidates and that it is after all only a detail, the resistance to it would show such a spirit on the part of the Whigs as would make all hope of co-operation impossible. It is a very small concession that the Radicals ask of the last numerous section of the Party—and if it is to be refused under pressure from Mr Goschen, who has no followers and who did his best on more than one occasion to destroy the last Liberal Government, I do not think that the appearance of union can or ought to be longer preserved.

In the same letter I referred to the Irish question, my observations on which will be given later in their place.

On September 15 I made an expedition to Scotland. I spoke at Glasgow and Inverness, besides making short speeches on other occasions.

At Glasgow I alluded to the question of Disestablishment, and at Mr Gladstone's strong request made to me previously, I urged the Dissenters to postpone their claim and unite in pressing forward other Liberal reforms. The principal portion of the speech was occupied in enforcing the claims of the Unauthorized Programme.

At Inverness I spoke on the land question with special reference to the condition and claims of the Crofters.

On September 24 I attended a meeting in the Victoria Hall, London—John Morley being in the chair. I argued at length in favour of free education and land for the labourers, and claimed that these reforms should not be excluded from any Liberal programme. I declared it would be impossible for me to join any government which should so exclude them.

On October 1 I spoke at Bradford where I repeated and further explained my claim that the points of the Unauthorized Programme should not be excluded from the consideration of a Liberal Government.

On October 14 I spoke in Wiltshire when I compared Goschen

to the Egyptian skeleton at the feast; and on the 19th I spoke to the Liberal Association of Birmingham.

This was the end of the campaign and the beginning of the General Election during which I made many speeches in Birmingham and one at Evesham both on the topics previously discussed and also on the question of 'fair trade' which excited much interest at the time of the election.

On November 6 Mr Gladstone wrote to me about Disestablishment. He said:

We are in danger I think of getting into a false position.

South of the Border the Tories try to make it a test question, and we protest.

If we do this, and rightly, how can we countenance making it a test question North of the Border?

He pointed out that it was difficult to separate the English and Scotch question and said:

The English case is for me simple. Within is a note of my opinions.

Much harm has I think been done *among the best men* by the plan propounded in *The Radical Programme* which, between you and me, I conceive to be outrageously unjust.

His note enclosed is as follows:

The *principle* of disestablishment has not yet been accepted by the English people.

Until there has been that acceptance, unequivocal and decisive, it cannot properly be entertained in Parliament.

I cannot say whether that acceptance will ever come but I feel as certain as of anything future the question has no existence for this Parliament.

My opinion of 1865:<sup>1</sup> Desiderata.

1. Then—attention.

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to Gladstone's speech of March 28, 1865, in which, while admitting the injustice of the existing ecclesiastical arrangements in Ireland, he argued against the immediate disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.

2. Now — conviction — political victory — administrative execution.

Method—Needless to speak of? It cannot be that of *The Radical Programme*.<sup>1</sup>

On December 17 a great banquet was held in the Town Hall to celebrate the Liberal victory in Birmingham.

On this occasion I claimed that the battle had been fought and won on the Unauthorized Programme, which had saved the Liberal Party from disaster.

### *Ireland*

In the early part of this year, while I was publicly advocating a Radical Programme for Great Britain, I was also endeavouring to arrange for a settlement of the Irish land and local government questions.

The negotiations on this subject are contained in the memorandum which follows.<sup>2</sup> They came finally to an end, so far as I was concerned, on July 27, 1885, and, in consequence of their failure, I made little reference to Ireland in my subsequent public speeches.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 108 n.

<sup>2</sup> An account of these negotiations, based partly on documents other than those quoted by Chamberlain, is in the press.

## CHAPTER VI

*An Account of the Negotiations in reference to  
National Councils and the Renewal of the Crimes  
Act in 1884 and 1885*

IN the autumn of 1884 and the spring of 1885, the relations between the Government and the Parnellites were very much strained. The Crimes Act of 1882 expired in 1885 and the Government had its renewal under consideration. Lord Spencer felt that he could not answer for the peace of Ireland without coercive legislation, and he was supported by a majority of the Cabinet. Sir Charles Dilke and myself were sanguine that if proper remedial legislation were introduced the renewal of the Crimes Act might be unnecessary, or, that in any case, its most stringent provisions might be dispensed with.

In October and November, 1884, Mr O'Shea frequently had interviews with me at the House of Commons and at my own house and discussed the possibility of some *modus vivendi* being found which might enable the Irish Nationalist Party to work with the Government and would offer a chance of a settlement of the Irish difficulty. The discussion turned chiefly on the question of further coercive legislation, and on the nature of the local government which might properly be given to Ireland. In these discussions Mr O'Shea declared himself to be the spokesman of Mr Parnell, who, he said, was getting sick of the agitation and would gladly bring it to a close if reasonable concessions were made. He was, however, of opinion that the attempt to renew the Crimes Act in its original form would be resisted to the uttermost by the Irish Party, and that something more than county government such as was proposed for England and Scotland would be necessary to satisfy Irish demands.

On November 27, 1884, Mr O'Shea left with me a short note of Mr Parnell's views respecting the renewal of the Crimes Act



and Irish Local Government. In this note it is suggested that the renewal of the Crimes Act might be covered by introducing in the same bill a considerable measure of county government with important accessories touching the public boards in Dublin, or, as an alternative, by limiting the duration of the re-enactment to one year so as to leave the matter open for the new Parliament to deal with afresh in 1886. The former of these alternatives was one which I had had for some time under consideration. The claim put forward by the Parnellite Party for Home Rule, or independent self-government, appeared to me one which it would be dangerous to concede and which would never be accepted even by the Radical section of English Liberals. On the other hand I thought it most desirable, if possible, to interest the Irish people, their press, and their leaders in Irish local affairs and in this way to divert their attention from the agitation to which they had committed themselves. I recognized their right to have direct control over those portions of their national administration which are strictly Irish in their character and do not in any way effect English or Scotch interests. With this view it appeared to me to be possible to superadd to local government, as it is understood in Great Britain, a Central Board for Ireland consisting either of delegates from the county boards, or of separately elected representatives, to whom might be entrusted the full control of such questions as are now dealt with in Ireland by the Local Government Board, the Board of Works, the Board of Education and other similar bodies. I talked these proposals over with many of my colleagues, including Lord Spencer and Mr Trevelyan, and, although they made objections, they did not appear unwilling to give further consideration to the subject and I was hopeful that their objections might be overcome in time.

While this project was occupying my mind I had occasion on December 17, 1884, to reply to a letter from Mr Duignan of Walsall, who had sent me a long account of a recent visit made by him to Ireland with his notes on the situation. In the course of this letter I told him, speaking for myself personally, that I inclined to some such compromise as a Central Irish Board, to

deal with such questions as land, education, railways, etc.<sup>1</sup> Mr Duignan asked for permission to publish my letter, and when this was declined, he further asked that he might be allowed to show it to some of his personal friends. To this I made no objection, but finding out subsequently that it was exciting more attention than I thought due to what after all was only the expression of an individual opinion, I wrote to Mr Duignan asking him not to circulate it any further. It appears that Mr Parnell heard of this letter and of the discussion which was taking place upon it. He went to Ireland at the beginning of January, 1885, and he must then have found that some of his extreme supporters were uneasy and fearful of a compromise which would indefinitely postpone the demand for Home Rule. I was told by the late Mr Dwyer Gray (with whom I had several conferences on the same subject, and who at one time gave warm support to the proposal in his newspaper<sup>2</sup>) that Mr O'Brien especially was entirely hostile to it. Accordingly, on January 5, 1885, Mr Parnell wrote to Mr O'Shea a letter<sup>3</sup>, of which I knew nothing at the time and which only came into my hands several years later. In this letter he said: 'In talking to our friend you must give him clearly to understand that we do *not* propose this Local Self Government plank as a substitute for the restitution of our Irish Parliament.' He adds that in his opinion the grant of local government would have little effect one way or the other on the larger question.

On January 6 O'Shea replied to Mr Parnell complaining that he had shifted his ground. The proposal was originally made as a compromise which would 'satisfy the Irish people', but Parnell's letter destroyed all idea of finality—'of party advantage or parliamentary peace'.

On January 13, 1885, Parnell replied that the question of the Irish Parliament must be kept distinct. He refers to my letter

<sup>1</sup> Published in *The Times*, July 6, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently an allusion to the leading article in the *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), May 9, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> The letter, which bears the address of the Irish Parliamentary Offices in London, was in fact written by Parnell on the eve of his departure for Ireland, where he arrived on the evening of January 6, 1885. (*The Times*, January 7, 1885.)

to Duignan as proposing a Central Board with more extensive powers than he intended, and objects to this as trenching on legislative functions, which, he says, he does not claim for his proposed Council. It is evident that Mr Parnell considered it prudent at this time to minimize the importance of his scheme in order to meet the objections of Mr O'Brien and others. At the same time there is in the scheme itself internal evidence that it was, in the first instance, proposed as a substitute for the restitution of an Irish Parliament. It would have been absurd to suggest the simultaneous existence of two central authorities in Dublin, both national, and practically elected by the same constituency, both having concurrent power of national taxation, both receiving Imperial contributions, and one of them having control of all the administration of such matters as local government, public works, education, congested districts, etc.<sup>1</sup> The subsequent reserve as to an Irish Parliament was an afterthought intended to modify the opposition which he encountered from some of his own followers. While, however, I understood that Mr Parnell proposed the scheme as a final settlement, I well knew that neither he, nor anyone else, could determine the course of future agitation, but I believed then, as I do now, that the adoption of a large yet safe proposal for the extension of local government would have cut the ground from under the feet of the agitators for independence—and that these would no longer have been able to have commanded any considerable support. As I have already stated, I did not know of this correspondence at the time.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The body proposed by Parnell would have had only administrative functions, which would not therefore have overlapped the powers of an Irish Parliament. For Parnell's proposals, see his and Chamberlain's letters in *The Times*, August 6 and 13, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> This statement is confirmed by Chamberlain's correspondence, which reveals no knowledge at this period of Parnell's letters of January 5 and 13, 1885. On the other hand, Parnell made it clear, in his speech at Cork on January 21, 1885, that he claimed the restitution of Grattan's Parliament, and that 'we have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nationhood, and we never shall'. This speech was reported and discussed in *The Times*, and Chamberlain must have known of it. None of Chamberlain's numerous letters and memoranda written at this period in connection with the 'National Councils' scheme suggest that in 1885 he 'understood that Mr Parnell proposed the scheme as a final settlement.'

On January 18, 1885, Mr O'Shea brought me Mr Parnell's scheme for National Councils, dated January 14, and left it with me.<sup>1</sup> By this scheme it was proposed to create county boards to be elected by the ratepayers triennially by ballot. These boards would levy county rates, be sanitary authorities, administer county business, be responsible for the relief of the poor, manage infirmaries, hospitals and asylums, and take charge of roads, bridges and harbours. They would have power to purchase or lease land for these objects and for other purposes, to grant concessions, and provide subventions and guarantees for railways, tramways and other undertakings within the county. Also to undertake arterial drainage. In order to guard the rights of landowners, a representation in proportion to the rates paid by them might be admitted. The county boards and the municipalities to elect representatives to serve on a Central Board in Dublin. The representatives of the landowners to have a separate elective power on this Board proportioned to that of their constituents in the elections to the county boards. The Central Board to have the management of the work administered by the Local Government Board, the Board of Works, the Board of Education, the Fishery Board, Asylums Boards, Valuation and Boundaries Survey, Charitable Donations and Endowed Schools Commissions. The Central Board to have power to levy rates for internal improvements, harbours, arterial drainage, planting and reclamation of land; subsidies, etc., to railways, tramways and public enterprises: for guarantees in reference to the purchase of their holdings by tenants and for the better housing of the poor. Loans and contributions from the Exchequer would be received by it. Levies for compensation for outrages or for extra police would be collected by the police authorities. I pointed out to Mr O'Shea that in some respects the proposal was more conservative than I expected, especially as provision was made for a separate representation of landowners and no claim was put

<sup>1</sup> Published in *The Times*, August 13, 1888. Strictly speaking, the words 'Mr Parnell's scheme for National Councils' are not a correct description of the document in question, which proposed the establishment, not of several 'National Councils', but of a single Irish 'Central Board'.

forward for the control of the police. Mr O'Shea said that these points had been fully considered by Mr Parnell and he added that if such a Council were established Parnell would be most probably willing to accept the chairmanship.

On the same day, January 18, I saw Mr Gladstone and reported all that had passed. Mr Gladstone told me that he had received a similar scheme embodying Mr Parnell's views through Mrs O'Shea. He approved of my action in entertaining the proposal which he thought was hopeful and requested me to continue the communications.

On January 19 O'Shea wrote a letter to Parnell explaining the circumstances under which the letter to Mr Duignan had been written, and in a characteristic fashion described an interview with me and laid down the bases of a possible agreement. He afterwards sent a copy of this letter, or a part of it, to me for approval. I replied, January 21, rather sharply, refusing to accept his account of the interview as correct, and saying that I would neither ask nor receive a pledge from Parnell of political support although I should be glad if it turned out that our views on Irish policy were not opposed and if we were able to work on the same lines.<sup>1</sup>

On the same day, January 21, I wrote a letter to John Morley with a full account of the previous communications and of my views of the situation. In the course of it I said:

\* The establishment of such a Board would at once find work for the most active men in the National Party. It would be a good education and political training for them, while the questions which would infallibly arise in regard to the incidence of taxation, the character of education, the nature and extent of public works, etc., etc., would occupy and divide Irish parties, and give them plenty to do in discussion among themselves, without involving any conflict with the external British authority. The newspapers must report its discussions and would have no space for the harangues of Irish patriots in the British House of Commons. In fact it seems to me almost necessary that practical work and all the conditions and questions to which it gives rise would take the

<sup>1</sup> For these letters see Garvin, *op. cit.*, i. 584-7.

place of the somewhat windy and always violent and ill-regulated agitation, the sole object of which has been to undermine the British Government and to make it unpopular with the people.

I confess that I was pleased and perhaps a little astonished to receive from O'Shea a scheme which he declares has the approval of Mr Parnell and which embodies most of my propositions. In one respect it goes much further than I should have thought possible in the direction of a Conservative policy since it proposes a separate representation of landowners both on the County Boards and on the Central Board in proportion to their rateable contributions.

I told Mr O'Shea, however, that this was not the time to discuss the details of such a measure nor was I in a position to enter into any negotiations. I saw nothing in it to which in principle I objected, and if I ever had the power to give effect to my opinions I should be prepared to press forward some such scheme and to endeavour to recommend it to the English and Scotch people. I pointed out that the policy of Mr Parnell and his party—less perhaps of Parnell than of those immediately under him—was to embitter English Liberals and to make even measures of this kind distasteful as they would be represented as concessions to an insatiable agitation. The only way to facilitate their progress was for Mr Parnell to bring his people round to more constitutional methods of agitation and to show both by his speeches and his action a sincere desire for co-operation with the English democracy. The present was a good time for such a change of front, and Mr Parnell could point out the alterations effected by recent reforms and urge his followers to give a trial to the new system before finally abandoning the hope of concert with the people of England, or even with the Liberal majority of them.

Yesterday I received from O'Shea in the shape of a letter from him to Mr Parnell which he asks me to approve, a somewhat cynical account of our conversation arranged to suit his own views. If such a representation were published it would be fatal to the work of reconciliation for it would degrade the whole matter into a mere partisan bargaining in which a bribe for Parnell's support was to be offered by the Radical party. I have long since ceased to care from a party point of view whether the Irish support us or not, as I believe the English and Scotch

democracy will shortly be strong enough to hold their own against all other sections.

My interest in the question arises entirely from a sense of the enormous difficulties interposed to the good working of our parliamentary system by the present exasperation of feeling between the two countries and by my firm belief that whatever the leaders may do or say the people might be brought round to take a kindly view of the parliamentary<sup>1</sup> connection, if their natural ambition for local work and local legislation were fully responded to.

I have told O'Shea that I cannot accept his account of the conversation as accurate but that I decline to enter on the matter in correspondence.

About the same time, Mr O'Shea brought me a copy of the Crimes Act of 1882 with omissions and alterations which he said had been made by Mr Parnell with his own hand.<sup>2</sup> In its altered shape Mr O'Shea said that Mr Parnell would not oppose its re-enactment, and would prevent anything in the nature of obstruction. In the course of subsequent conversations, I stated to Mr O'Shea that in my opinion no Government could dispense with some provision directed against boycotting and intimidation, and this point formed the subject of some discussion. I understood, that if the Act were limited to one year, Mr Parnell would consent to more stringent provisions than he would be prepared to accept in the case of an act for three years or for a longer period.

On February 26 Mr O'Shea brought a suggestion from Parnell that the latter should have facilities given him for bringing forward his scheme of a National Board, and that the Government should declare themselves favourable to it.

<sup>1</sup> Another copy of this letter has 'British' instead of 'parliamentary'. The first MS. draft has unfortunately not been preserved among the Chamberlain Papers.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, O'Shea seems to have brought Chamberlain this document in November, 1884—probably on November 27. Among the Chamberlain Papers is a list, in Chamberlain's hand-writing, of the sections of the 1882 Crimes Act that were to be respectively dropped and renewed. At the bottom of the list is written, also in Chamberlain's hand-writing: 'This copy of Crimes Act was brought me by Mr O'Shea who said that as marked Mr Parnell would not seriously oppose its re-enactment. November 1884.'

During the whole of this time I was in frequent communication with Mr Gladstone and others of my colleagues in reference to the whole subject, endeavouring to bring them to accept something in the nature of Mr Parnell's proposals and at the same time to consent to some modification of the Crimes Act.

On March 10 I wrote to Lord Spencer upon these subjects.

On March 23 Lord Spencer circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet on both subjects pointing out the necessity for a renewal of the Crimes Act and indicating the clauses on which he thought he would have to insist. He also proposed a Land Purchase Bill, and a Local Government Bill, but not a Central Board.

On April 11 I circulated a memorandum on Lord Spencer's proposals in which I urged the amendment of the new Crimes Bill in the sense of Mr Parnell's suggestions. I also referred to the Central Board in connection with a memorandum on the subject previously communicated to Lord Spencer.

On April 14 I received a letter from Lord Spencer acknowledging my memorandum on county and local government and saying, '*I do not think that we are far apart in our views. I shall lean to some Central Board.*'

On April 24 I had an interview with Cardinal Manning by appointment, his wish to see me having been communicated through Sir Charles Dilke. I consulted Mr Gladstone and he gave his assent to the interview. (See Dilke's memorandum.<sup>1</sup>) Almost immediately afterwards I communicated the result to Mr Gladstone and subsequently to Lord Spencer and others of my colleagues in the following memorandum:

[Memorandum]

April 24, 1885.

I saw Cardinal Manning to-day at his house in Westminster. He commenced by referring to his conversation yesterday with Sir Charles Dilke. He said that the Irish bishops including Archbishop Croke passed through London on their way to Rome, and that he had had full explanations with them. They were all opposed to separation between the two countries. Some

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Dilke*, ii. 130.



expressed themselves in favour of a separate Parliament. Cardinal Manning, however, pointed out that this would not be favourable to the interests of Irish Catholics; that an Irish House of Lords would consist chiefly of Protestant and Orange peers; that the Irish members who now represent Catholic interests in the British Parliament would be drawn away and that a collision between the Irish Parliament and the English Parliament would almost inevitably result from the repeal of the Union.

The Bishops had been impressed by these and other considerations and Cardinal Manning had then proceeded to urge that what they really required was local government in a complete and liberal sense, and that they ought to confine their efforts and demands to this practical end and not to waste their labour on a sentimental agitation which was unlikely to be successful, but might excite among the people hopes certain to be disappointed.

The Bishops stated that they had been made aware of a private suggestion of mine for local government, which included a proposal for a Central Board with powers of taxation and legislation on matters not affecting the interests of the Empire as a whole, and that they were inclined to accept these proposals as satisfying all just and reasonable demands. Cardinal Manning himself agreed in this view.

I then stated to the Cardinal that I did not know how they had become acquainted with my suggestion but that I assumed that a letter written by me to a Mr Duignan, a personal acquaintance of mine, and which I was aware had been shown by him to some persons in Ireland had come to their knowledge.

I stated to the Cardinal the effect of this letter, and he again said that such a proposal seemed to him to meet the case and to be assured beforehand of the support of the ecclesiastical authorities of Ireland.

He said that there were practically two influences powerful in Ireland at this moment—Mr Parnell's, who was of course the most influential layman in the country—and the Bishops, who had great weight among the clergy and universally on all matters appertaining to religion.

In reference to the subject under consideration the Bishops were on our side.

The Cardinal asked if I knew anything of Mr Parnell's views. I explained that from my position it was impossible that I should

be in personal communication with Mr Parnell but that from time to time I had heard from Captain O'Shea accounts of Mr Parnell's opinions on this subject and that I had been given to understand that he was personally in favour of some such scheme, although I did not know how far he thought he could influence his followers to adopt it.

The Cardinal said he was in communication with some of the prominent members of the Nationalist party in the House of Commons (I inferred that Mr Arthur O'Connor might be one of them<sup>1</sup>) and that he found them favourably inclined to the proposal. He had been told that with one or two exceptions the Irish Home Rule M.P.s were all opposed to a separation.

In answer to my question Cardinal Manning thought that it would not be desirable that Mr Parnell should be told at present of our interview, but he agreed that it might be well that I should again refer to the general question in conversation with Captain O'Shea and should point out if I had an opportunity how desirable it was that some practical step should be taken to carry the suggestion further.

The Cardinal also thought that it would be advisable that he himself should see the member of Parliament with whom he had previously communicated, and that through him he should invite Mr Parnell to see him so that he might learn from the Cardinal the views of the Irish clergy.

I remarked that I thought such a course very desirable as Mr Parnell was naturally jealous of his authority and would not like any proceedings taken behind his back; but I added that in my view the difficulty would not be in his personal objections to such a scheme, but in his hesitation to commit himself in face of public opposition from members of his own party.

The Cardinal expressed a wish to have from me in the shape of heads some fuller account of the details of my proposed scheme and this I promised to send.

I explained that I spoke entirely on my own responsibility and could not answer for my colleagues, but I said that I had gathered from conversations with Lord Spencer that he would be prepared to give full consideration to the subject. I pointed out that the assent of the Government as a whole to any such scheme would be made much more probable if I could point to the assured

<sup>1</sup> 'Dilke says it was Sexton.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)

acceptance of it by the Irish people as represented by the Bishops or by Mr Parnell.

The Cardinal concluded the interview by expressing his extreme sense of the importance of the subject; his belief that it opened a real prospect for the pacification of Ireland, and he ended with the words 'I think the present position is very hopeful'.

On April 25 I circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet<sup>1</sup> in which I took as my starting point that a separate Parliament for Ireland could not be granted by any patriotic statesman; and then went on to suggest a scheme generally in accord with Parnell's proposals. In this scheme I proposed that certain legislative functions should be conferred upon the Central Board, as, although this was not in Mr Parnell's proposal, I did not know that, at that time, he would object to such a development.<sup>2</sup>

On April 26 I received a letter from Lord Spencer in which he refers to Parnell's proposals *re* Local Government, the general principles of which he is prepared to adopt,<sup>3</sup> and also to my memorandum on the Crimes Act. In this letter Lord Spencer sums up, although not finally, against the proposal for a Central Board. He says 'I have very carefully considered Mr Parnell's proposals.' One of his objections to the Central Board was that the Healys, O'Briens and O'Connors would manage and lead it. He also doubted if Ulster would accept it.

On April 28 there was a Cabinet Council to consider Lord Spencer's proposals and it was evident that the majority of the Cabinet would accept his view.

<sup>1</sup> A copy was also sent to Cardinal Manning, among whose papers it is preserved.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain's memorandum of April 25 also differed from Parnell's proposal in incorporating a suggestion made by Spencer in his memorandum of March 23, that the Irish Viceroyalty be abolished and replaced by a Secretaryship of State.

<sup>3</sup> No new principles were in fact involved in Parnell's proposals in so far as county government, as distinct from the 'Central Board' was concerned. The Queen's Speech of 1881 had announced the Government's intention of establishing representative local government in the counties in both Great Britain and Ireland. Spencer's letter is, in fact, dated April 26.

On the same day I sent word to Parnell through O'Shea that Dilke and I were prepared to offer our resignations if the views which we had been pressing were not accepted, and if, in the event of our resignations being accepted, Parnell would publicly pledge his full support to the scheme proposed by him in January, and would prevent obstruction on the part of his followers to a renewal of the Crimes Act for one year.

On April 30 I heard from O'Shea that Parnell, who had taken time for consideration, was prepared to accept this offer.<sup>1</sup>

On May 1 there was a meeting at Spencer House to consider the differences which had arisen, at which Lord Hartington, Trevelyan, Lefevre, Spencer and myself (and I think Childers and Dilke) attended. No decision was finally arrived at, and at the Cabinet meeting held subsequently on the same day, Mr Gladstone, Childers, Lefevre, Trevelyan and Dilke strongly supported the proposal for National Councils. Spencer opposed, and Harcourt vehemently agreed with him.

May 4. Cardinal Manning wrote that the interview with Mr Parnell had been satisfactory, and that 'two conditions of acceptance for the scheme'—meaning the support of Mr Parnell and the Irish bishops—'appear to be secure'.

May 6. Mr Gladstone wrote to me a letter in which he refers to conversations on the Crimes Bill and Local Government proposals, and speaks of his 'covenant' with his colleagues (not to retire) as being 'substantially fulfilled'. He is now a free man and entitled to claim his release.

On May 9 there appeared a leading article in the *Freeman* in favour of the Local Government scheme.<sup>2</sup> I had previously seen Dwyer Gray, the editor, and had discussed Mr Parnell's proposals

<sup>1</sup> The message brought by O'Shea, wholly in his own hand-writing, read: 'While strongly opposing the Crimes Bill, will endeavour to prevent any obstructive opposition, the necessity of voting urgency, or loss of time such as to jeopardize the Local Government Bills. It is understood that the Irish Local Government Bill will be introduced before the Crimes Bill.' Even assuming that O'Shea's report of Parnell's undertaking is correct, it meant only that the latter promised not to carry opposition to the Crimes Bill so far as to leave no time for the passing of the Local Government Bills.

<sup>2</sup> The *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin). In fact, the article in question was extremely non-committal on the subject of Chamberlain's scheme.

with him. Gray said that personally he was fully prepared to support the scheme, but he wanted positive assurance that Parnell was committed to it, and said that without that he could not take it up in his paper. Sir Charles Dilke tells me that on May 9 Mr Gladstone wrote to Lord Spencer and to Lord Hartington strongly in favour of the acceptance of the compromise.<sup>1</sup> But on the same day the Cabinet finally rejected it by a majority. Harcourt came round to the scheme and it was supported by all the Commons except Hartington, and opposed by all the Peers except Granville.<sup>2</sup> As we were standing afterwards on the landing of the first floor Mr Gladstone said to me, 'These men have rejected this scheme, but if God spares their lives for five years more they will be glad to accept something infinitely stronger.'<sup>3</sup> I thought then that these words were uttered in a fit of temporary irritation. I did not know that a few months later Mr Gladstone himself would do so much to secure the fulfilment of his prophecy.

On May 12 there was another meeting at Spencer House to consider Spencer's proposed legislation. In the discussions in the Cabinet Sir Charles Dilke and I accepted the rejection of the scheme in view of the near approach of the time when a dissolution must take place, but we positively declared that under these circumstances we would not agree to any tinkering either with local government, coercion, or land legislation. These were matters which we thought ought to be relegated to the new Parliament. We understood accordingly that no bills would be brought in, and when an amendment of the Land Bill was promised by Mr Gladstone in the House of Commons on May 20, Sir Charles Dilke regarded this as a breach of the agreement, and immediately sent in his resignation to Mr Gladstone. When I returned to the House later the same evening, he told me what

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone's letter to Spencer of May 9 was in fact written after the Cabinet had that day rejected the 'Central Board' scheme, which it described as 'dead as mutton'. (Add. MSS. 44312, f. 95.)

<sup>2</sup> This sentence was added to the MS. by Chamberlain, probably after reading Dilke's account of the episode. (*Life of Dilke*, ii. 132.)

<sup>3</sup> Dilke reports Gladstone as saying: 'Within six years, if it please God to spare their lives, they will be repenting in ashes.' (*Life of Dilke*, ii. 132.)

he had done, and although I thought he had been somewhat hasty I made common cause with him and forwarded my resignation also to Mr Gladstone. Communications subsequently took place (see Dilke's memorandum<sup>1</sup>) to see if any compromise or arrangement could be effected. But these were still going on and our resignations had not been withdrawn when on June 8 the Government were defeated on the Budget and immediately afterwards resigned. Previously to this, on June 2, 1885, Mr Heneage wrote to Mr Gladstone giving an account of an interview he had had with O'Shea on June 1, when O'Shea had left with him in writing the terms on which Parnell would prevent obstruction to the renewal of the Crimes Act, only allowing a sufficient show of opposition to satisfy his extreme followers.<sup>2</sup>

On June 4 Heneage gave notice of a motion that any exceptional powers should be entrusted only to a responsible Minister of the Crown, and that the time had come for a reconsideration of the anomalous system of government in Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the change of government I communicated with Parnell through O'Shea and enquired if he still adhered to his proposals. In that case Dilke and I were ready to pledge ourselves not to join any Cabinet which would not make them part of its programme. We were also ready to speak in the country in favour of these proposals and proposed to go to Ireland on a visit to study the question there with a view to further discussion.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Dilke*, ii. 135-144.

<sup>2</sup> This account of Heneage's letter to Gladstone of June 2, 1885, is based on a letter written by Heneage to Chamberlain on August 3, 1888, at the time of the latter's controversy with Parnell concerning the Kilmainham 'treaty' and the 'National Councils' scheme. In his letter of August 3, 1888, Heneage admitted that he had not kept a copy of his letter to Gladstone of June 2, 1885, and his recollection of what he had written on that occasion was not in fact accurate. Heneage's letter of June 2, 1885, recommended the abolition of the vicereignty and the inclusion in the new Crimes Bill of a saving clause providing that the bill should be brought into force only by an Order in Council. The letter does not mention O'Shea or any bargain with Parnell by which obstruction to the Crimes Bill was to be prevented. (Add. MSS. 44491, ff. 20-22.)

<sup>3</sup> Heneage's motion in fact read 'abolition', not 'reconsideration'. (Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, ccxcviii. 1193.)

My speeches at the Cobden Club, June 13, and at Holloway<sup>1</sup> on June 17, referring to local government in Ireland were made in pursuance of this proposal. I was not however able to obtain from Mr Parnell any assurance that he adhered to his own proposals and I complained on several occasions of the want of a definite statement from him and also of the hostile tone which was adopted by *United Ireland*<sup>2</sup> and by some Irish speakers in regard to our proposed visit to Ireland. On July 11 I wrote the following letter to O'Shea:

*Private*

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

July 11, 1885.

My dear O'Shea,

Referring to our conversation in the House of Commons on Thursday last, I think it right to remind you of various communications that have passed between us previously, and to ask you to show this letter to Mr Parnell and to ascertain his views in reference to the points named.

You are aware that I have always expressed the opinion that a solution of the Irish difficulty could only be found by a frank interchange of opinion with the leader of the National Party, and relying, as I have done, on Mr Parnell's honesty of purpose and sincerity, I have been at all times anxious to know his wishes and intentions and ready to give the fullest and most earnest consideration to them.

I have often expressed my conviction that the Irish people were entitled to the largest measure of self-government consistent with the continued integrity of the Empire, and I have urged upon you the importance of definite proposals for legislation with this object which might secure the support of English and Scotch Liberals, while at the same time fulfilling the just expectations of the majority of Irishmen.

With this object I ventured myself to sketch a scheme of County Boards and National Councils which I thought might be accepted as a settlement of this question. I did not suggest this

<sup>1</sup> In fact, at the Holloway Hall, Islington.

<sup>2</sup> William O'Brien's paper, which, beginning on June 27, 1885, published a series of very hostile articles, warning Chamberlain and Dilke not to visit Ireland.

arrangement as a substitute for Home Rule, as the demand for a separate Parliament, including an Irish House of Lords and an Irish House of Commons, with the full powers of a Parliament in regard to every subject except Foreign and Colonial affairs, and National defences, is one which may be treated independently of the question of local government.

I have not concealed my objection to such a proposal nor my opinion that it could not be accepted by the people of Great Britain, but on the other hand I have never attempted to obtain any pledges for its withdrawal.

A complete and effectual system of local government may be, and I hope it would be, found sufficient to satisfy the Irish National sentiment and to relieve the irritation that now prevails, but if this should not be the case, no arrangement could possibly bind the Irish people not to pursue their demands any further.

Under these circumstances I was very glad to hear from you in January that Mr Parnell had been carefully considering the whole subject and had authorized you to place in my hands a written scheme for Irish local government, which, though it differs from mine in important details, was based on similar principles.

You informed me that Mr Parnell had declared that the acceptance of his scheme in its main features would be in his opinion a settlement of the question and would lay the foundation for amicable and cordial relations between the two countries.

Speaking generally, I could see nothing in his proposals to which Liberals ought to object, and I believed that great advantages would result from its adoption both to Great Britain, and to Ireland. I have therefore since that time omitted no opportunity to bring these proposals to the notice of my colleagues and to urge their acceptance as the basis of immediate legislation. I have found great support for them in many quarters, and I have been ready to make their inclusion as part of the programme of any Liberal Government an absolute condition of my retention of office in the past—and—under present circumstances—of my acceptance of office in the future.

In pursuance of the same object I have, since the resignation of the late Government, called attention to the matter in public speeches, and I have arranged for an article published with my authority in the *Fortnightly Review* in which the main points of the proposals in question are explained and defended.



I have also arranged with Sir Charles Dilke to visit Ireland at an early date, and with the hope of gaining information which may enable us to urge with greater effect the prosecution of this scheme.

All these steps have been taken with your knowledge and concurrence and have been I believe well known to Mr Parnell.

I have, therefore, seen with astonishment and regret the bitter attacks (both on Sir Charles Dilke and myself, and also on the scheme for local government which has been supported by us and which is identical with Mr Parnell's own proposals)<sup>1</sup> which have been made in his paper *United Ireland* and by some of his leading followers—such as Mr Deasy, M.P.

It is impossible that these attacks—which will greatly prejudice the favourable consideration of the proposals themselves—could be made unless the authors of them believed that they had Mr Parnell's approval, and I think that Mr Parnell is bound as a gentleman and a man of honour to take steps to correct the impression, which appears to prevail among some of his supporters, that he is hostile either to our visit or to the scheme for local government which has been prepared on lines laid down by himself.

I might stop here and leave the matter to Mr Parnell to deal with as his own sense of fairness and straightforward dealing may suggest; but before concluding I wish to put before you some considerations of policy.

Is it or is it not, desirable that some such scheme of local government for Ireland should be passed into law? I think it is, in the interests of Ireland and the Irish people. Surely it must be the wish of all except the most extreme fanatics that the chronic agitation should cease and that the country shall have peace. If there still remain grievances to be redressed or reforms to be carried out, it is eminently desirable that these should if possible be obtained by ordinary constitutional methods, and meanwhile Mr Parnell will have been the instrument for conferring on his countrymen material advantages greater than have ever been contemplated by any previous leader.

If these arguments are granted, I proceed to say that the chance

<sup>1</sup> This identification of Chamberlain's proposals with Parnell's is not of course correct, as Chamberlain later recognized, after he had seen the letters suppressed by O'Shea.

of obtaining such results ought not to be lightly thrown away, and may not recur again in our time.

The Radical section of the Liberal party, headed by Mr Gladstone himself, were never so much inclined to take a broad and generous view of their duty to Ireland. I believe firmly that the next election will in any case give a majority to the Liberal party independently of any Irish support, and if the offer now made on behalf of the English Radicals is rejected, I cannot see any light in the future or any prospect of the better relations between the two countries which I believe must be an object of desire to all friends of either.

I have written to you fully and frankly—I trust I may have an equally full and frank reply.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

The following is his reply:

*Private*

House of Commons Library.

July 13, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

Yesterday I showed Mr Parnell your letter of the 11th inst., and had a conversation with him on the whole subject.

With regard to *United Ireland* he again assured me that he interferes with it very seldom, and never except through the editor, Mr W. O'Brien, M.P. The latter was abroad when the articles to which you allude were printed, the newspaper being left during his absence under the guidance of Mr Healy. Mr Healy became aware that Mr Fottrell, whom he detests, was writing an inspired article for the *Fortnightly Review*,<sup>1</sup> *hinc illae lachrymae*. Mr Parnell assured me that he took the earliest opportunity on Mr O'Brien's return to explain his favourable views and wishes with regard to your visit with Dilke to Ireland.

Respecting the general matter, Mr Parnell informed me that in his opinion the state of affairs has materially changed during the last few weeks. In the first place, the Land Question has again assumed a serious aspect, and important agitators, rivals of his, are suggesting either 'No Rent' or 'Such rent as you please'. Then,

<sup>1</sup> 'Local Government and Ireland', *Fortnightly Review*, New Series, xxxviii (July, 1885), 1-16.

while he has carefully followed the course of your efforts, in furtherance of views in more or less accordance with his own, as explained to him from time to time by me, he holds that Mr Gladstone's declaration with regard to the Crimes Act remains the landmark of the policy of the late Government.

On the other hand, without requiring or requesting any corresponding support in other things, the new Administration, on examination of the state of Ireland, immediately declared that it could not conscientiously reimpose exceptional legislation on that country. The House of Lords has without a murmur passed the Irish Registration Bill; the Labourers Bill, much neglected by the Liberals, is now promised. Mr Parnell then talked about Lord Carnarvon's speech, especially about the passages declaring his mind to be open and recording his approval of the system adopted by the Colonies, under whose laws English, Irish and Scotch dwelt together in amity. If this, continued Mr Parnell, foreshadows as the Tory policy the similar legislative independence of Ireland, it is exactly his own policy, which is not, and has never been, Separation. But should satisfactory evidence be forthcoming that Legislative Independence is likely to be proposed within a reasonable time, Mr Parnell said that he thinks it doubtful whether it would be worth while to encumber the Irish question at present with a larger extension of local government to Ireland than to England.

In the meanwhile I had been endeavouring to impress on him the quackery of the Tories and the folly of losing the substance in grasping at the shadow. I mentioned Mr T. P. O'Connor's letter on the Wakefield election,<sup>1</sup> and the determination expressed in it to credit the Government with good intentions pending a declaration of its Irish policy. I suggested that this was a very long tether. Mr Parnell replied that only a reasonable time need be granted, and he instances the Irish estimates as affording the occasion to invite a descent from the Vague. It is but right to mention that throughout the conversation he expressed very kind personal feeling, and he concluded by observing that it must not

<sup>1</sup> The result of the Wakefield by-election, declared on July 2, 1885, was a Conservative gain from the Liberals by a majority of 257. The Irish voters at Wakefield, estimated at about 150 by *The Times*, July 3, 1885, were, according to that newspaper, advised by the Nationalist leaders to vote for the Conservative candidate.

be considered unreasonable under the altered complexion of the situation, that he should take a few days for further reflection before giving a definite and definitive reply to the categorical questions in your letter.

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA

PS. So as to avoid misunderstanding, I have made a copy of this letter for Mr Parnell.

On July 22 Mr Labouchere wrote me an account of a long interview he had had with Mr Healy<sup>1</sup> in which he had told him that the Liberals were sure to win without the Irish but that if he or his friends wished for any sort of Home Rule he must understand that the only chance was to ally himself with the Radicals. That I had tried to impress this upon Parnell: that he talked rubbish about Grattan's Parliament and was thoroughly unpractical. Healy said that Parnell in his heart cared nothing for the Irish, particularly since a mob ill-treated him in 1880. He was influenced by personal feeling and desired to be revenged on Gladstone and Forster. Labouchere asked Healy about Davitt. He laughed at the idea of Davitt's being any use to us and said he was a very vain man and a nuisance. 'We should like him to go against us openly for this would smash him. He cares neither for Tories nor for Radicals. If we joined the latter, he would intrigue with the former and vice versa.' He says there was never anything which could be called a treaty with the Tories but there was an understanding that if they helped the Tories generally there was to be no coercion. Asked 'What do you say to Chamberlain's scheme of Home Rule in the *Fort-nightly*', he said 'It is mine. There are a few things which I object to, but in the main it would satisfy me, but Chamberlain could not carry it.' Then he said 'Can we have any assurances that Chamberlain's scheme would be one on which a Liberal or Radical ministry would stand or fall? In this case I would propose that we do not compromise ourselves with the Tories. When the plan is put forward in the next Parliament we should

<sup>1</sup> The summary of Labouchere's letter that follows is very confused and the quotations given are not accurate. The letter is printed in full in Appendix B.

have to say "it does not go far enough", but it would merely be a dummy opposition. Whether I could carry this with my party I don't know. I think I could.' 'He told me to tell you that those who wished you should be ill-received in Ireland would not have their way, and that you may count upon a perfectly friendly reception. The letter is long but I thought you would like to know Healy's idea. He is by far the most able and the most honest of the Irish. It is a pity that some Fenian does not "remove" our friend Parnell.'

As a result of my conversations with O'Shea and his statements, I came to the conclusion that Parnell was trying to negotiate a better bargain with the Tories; in fact O'Shea said, 'He has had a better offer.'

Under these circumstances it seemed unwise to pursue the matter any further and accordingly I told O'Shea to let Parnell know that as far as I was concerned the matter was at an end.

On July 30 he forwarded a copy of a letter which he had written to Mr Parnell as follows:

1, Albert Mansions, S.W.

July 29, 1885.

My dear Parnell,

On the 27th inst. Mr Chamberlain asked me whether you had yet answered the question in the letter from him respecting the Irish self-government scheme which I showed you. I replied that I was unfortunately without any information from you on the point.

After some observations he requested me to inform you that under the peculiar circumstances, the Liberal leaders who had adopted your proposal to them and had run much risk in promoting the adoption of it, must now drop it from the programme.

Yours very truly,

W. H. O'SHEA<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are three versions in O'Shea's hand-writing of this letter among the Chamberlain Papers. The version printed here is that given in Chamberlain's MS. and is identical with the version of the letter numbered by Chamberlain's secretary for inclusion in the 'National Council' dossier. The other two versions both have 'Irish local government' instead of 'Irish self-government'. There are other minor differences.

In the debates on Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bill in 1886 McCarthy, Healy, and Gray were put up by Parnell to ridicule the National Councils Plan and to assert that Parnell had no concern in it but repudiated it altogether.

In reply to Gray, June 1, 1886, I said that it had come to me from an Irish source: that Mr Gray knew perfectly well what that source was.

In October 1886 there was a paragraph in *Truth* by Mr Labouchere saying that Parnell denied having ever approved of the National Councils scheme. Mr O'Shea wrote to Mr Labouchere to complain and Labouchere replied that his informant was Mr Parnell. Mr O'Shea then showed Labouchere the two letters from Mr Parnell dated January 5 and January 13, 1885. In 1888, on July 30, in the debate on the Parnell Commission Bill, Mr Parnell made an attack on me which he continued at the commencement of the sitting on the 31st. In this he charged me with having been anxious to betray to him and to his friends the secrets and counsels of my colleagues in the Cabinet, and referred particularly to negotiations which had passed at the time of the Kilmainham Treaty and again at the time of the National Councils scheme.

In reply, I said that on both occasions every communication important or unimportant, which passed directly or indirectly between Mr Parnell and myself was communicated at the time to those of my colleagues who were specially interested in the matter. Mr O'Shea wrote to *The Times* on August 1 confirming my statement and asserting that the National Councils scheme was altogether Mr Parnell's and that it was accompanied by a proposal for a modified Crimes Act which Mr Parnell was prepared to support. Mr Parnell wrote to *The Times* on August 4 challenging the production of his copy of the Crimes Act and alleging that his scheme for National Councils was altogether different from mine. I replied to this letter on August 11 and gave the particulars both of Mr Parnell's amended Crimes Act and also of his proposal for local self-government in Ireland handed to me by Mr O'Shea.<sup>1</sup> Speaking on August 5, 1888, Sir

<sup>1</sup> For these letters see *The Times*, August 2, 6 and 13, 1888.

William Harcourt confirmed my statement that the negotiations in reference to the National Councils were known to all my colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harcourt does not seem to have made any speech on this subject in August, 1888; in any case August 5, 1888, was a Sunday. His confirmation of Chamberlain's statement was probably made in private conversation. See p. 28 n.

## CHAPTER VII

1885 (continued)

IN the autumn, and after the prorogation of Parliament, there were rumours in the newspapers that Mr Gladstone contemplated a surrender to Parnell on the Home Rule question.

Mr Herbert Gladstone made a speech indicating assent to the creation of a separate Parliament; and a definite statement in regard to Mr Gladstone's own views subsequently appeared in the *Standard* newspaper. According to Labouchere, this statement was communicated by Herbert Gladstone to Wemyss Reid, of the *Leeds Mercury*, and by him to Mudford of the *Standard*.

On September 8, I made my speech at Warrington repudiating for myself absolutely any assent to Parnell's demands, and it will be observed that in the postscript of Mr Gladstone's letter of September 11 he says that he sorrowfully agrees with me, and still regrets the failure of the Central Council project, while he is extremely unsanguine as to a legislative settlement.

In his letter of September 22 he says that he supposes 'the party will, as far as it has a choice, set first about the matters on which it is agreed'; and he quotes Bright with approval as saying that 'the average opinion of the party ought to be the rule of immediate action'.

These expressions, together with the qualified contradiction of current rumours which appeared in the newspapers, justified me in receiving with great hesitation the statements that were made of Mr Gladstone's intentions. In this, and subsequent correspondence, however, he referred more than once to the possibility that Irish business might shoulder aside other matters.

On September 26 he wrote me as follows:



Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

September 26, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

I felt well-pleased and easy after receiving your note of the 21st, but there is a point I should like to put to you with reference to your self-denying ordinance making the three points conditions of office.<sup>1</sup>

Supposing Parnell to come back 80 to 90 strong, to keep them together, to bring forward a plan which shall contain in your opinion adequate securities for the Union of the Empire, and to press this plan under whatever name as having claims to precedence (claims which could hardly be denied even by opponents)—do you think no Government should be formed to promote such a plan unless the three points were glued on to it at the same time?

Do you not think you would do well to reserve elbow-room for a case like this?

I hope you will not think my suggestion—it is not a question—captious and a mantrap. It is meant in a very different sense.

A Liberal majority is assumed in it.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

I replied:

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.

September 28, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I had certainly not contemplated the contingency you suggest in your letter of the 26th. I had supposed that the first work of a Liberal Ministry would be Local Government, and I thought it probable that Bills for the three countries would be brought in together. In consequence of Mr Parnell's change of front I assumed that these Bills would not go beyond County Councils, and that any further proposal<sup>2</sup> would be left over till a more favourable time. In this case the Irish Bill must necessarily contain powers to local authorities to acquire land, since this is already included in the Land Act and Labourers' Acts and it would

<sup>1</sup> The three points laid down in Chamberlain's speech of September 24, 1858: 'free schools', conferment on local authorities of powers of compulsory land-purchase, and equality of sacrifice amongst all classes of tax-payers.

<sup>2</sup> 'i.e. for National Councils.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)

be necessary to transfer the powers from existing bodies to the new Councils. The only question would then be whether similar powers should not be given in the English and Scotch Bills and to this I feel myself pledged.

I may remind you that as regards taxation, I expressed myself as entirely satisfied by the terms of your manifesto and I have no wish to go beyond it.

As regards Free Schools, I should be very glad if the Government saw its way to take the question up—but if it did not I should feel that I was bound to support by speech and vote any resolution that might be moved on the subject.

I can hardly think it probable that Parnell will bring forward any scheme that a Liberal Government could support. He has so entirely put Local Government in the background, and has so plainly declared for a separate and independent Parliament that I have little hope of his action.

If, however, he did take the course suggested in your letter, I should be bound to strain every nerve to assist the Government in dealing with it.

I am not however certain that I could not render more help from outside than as a member of the Cabinet.

I should at all times be greatly influenced by any opinion you might form as to the way in which I could be of most service.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

On October 26 I wrote to Mr Gladstone as follows:

I cannot see my way at all about Ireland. Parnell has shown that he is not to be depended upon. He will not stick to any 'minimum'—even if he could now be induced to formulate another. After his recent public utterances he must go for a separate independent Parliament. For myself, I would rather let Ireland go altogether than accept the responsibility of a nominal union. But I think that a great number of Liberals—probably the majority—are not willing to give more than English Local Government. National Councils would have tried them very severely, and beyond that I do not believe they can possibly be pressed at present.

If the Tories are in a minority, they will join malcontent Liberals in resisting concessions. If they were strong enough to hold their own with Parnell's support, I do not know that there is any limit to the price they would pay. In this case however the responsibility of proposing anything would not lie with us.

On the whole I think the only chance is to let the Irishmen 'stew in their juice'. It would be very desirable to unite the Irish and English Local Government Bills if possible, but I expect the practical difficulties are enormous.

O'Shea, who was here last week, says there are internecine conflicts in their ranks. Healey [*sic*] and Campbell (Parnell's Secretary) actually came to blows at a recent convention. If we have a good majority it may be possible to divide them and secure some support for our proposals.

Whilst this correspondence was still in progress I received the following letter from Labouchere, which led to a somewhat lengthened correspondence:

*Private*

10, Queen Anne's Gate,  
St. James's Park.  
October 18, [1885].<sup>1</sup>

My dear Chamberlain,

Please don't mention this to any one except J. Morley; I tell it you as it may perhaps be as well that you should know what the little game of our revered G.O.M. has been. My own impression is that it is not likely to succeed.

Just before the end of the Session Herbert G.<sup>2</sup> came to me, and asked me to endeavour to arrange some sort of *modus vivendi* with the Irish. His father, he said, required time, if any joint action was to be taken in the next Parliament to gain over the Whigs, and he was determined not to lead unless he had a united party behind him. I told Herbert Gladstone, that I was convinced that Parnell, for various reasons did not want an arrangement, and that he would prefer to remain an irreconcilable, but that it might be possible to influence him through Healy and others. So I sent to Healy, who came over to England. Healy explained that, per-

<sup>1</sup> Labouchere usually omitted to state the year at the head of his letters.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Gladstone.

sonally he was strongly in favour of an arrangement, but that anyone going against Parnell would be nowhere just now, because the Irish had got it into their heads that union was strength. But he promised to do all that he could. Then I went abroad. On my return Herbert wrote to ask what had been done. Healy replied, that a Committee consisting of Sexton, T. P. O'Connor, etc., has been appointed to look into federations generally, and to report thereon, but that Parnell hardly spoke to his followers upon political matters, beyond such as concerned the Irish elections, and he went into various details as to what he thought would prove satisfactory. This letter, I sent to Hawarden, and got back a letter stating the views of the G.O.M., the phrase being always 'I' or 'I think my father' as had been agreed. The G.O.M. says that he is disposed to grant the fullest home rule, etc., but that he does not think it desirable to formulate a scheme before the elections, and he again presses for the Irish minimum. I have sent this to Healy.

Evidently the game of the G.O.M. is to endeavour to unite the party on Irish legislation, and to make this his *cheval de bataille*; but he says that he will do nothing unless he can get some assurance that the Irish will in the main back him up. I don't think that they will, but with such strange creatures, there is no knowing.

I spent yesterday morning with our friend Randolph. He says that the Conservatives count upon 280 returns in their favour, and that if they get anything like this they will not resign, and they hope to remain in office for two or three years, owing to the rivalities between the Whigs, the Irish, and the Radicals. He says that Hartington, who up to now has been very guarded in his observations, now in private denounces you, and vows that he will not stand it. In his (Randolph's) opinion, he will withdraw from politics. If he does not, Randolph anticipates that the outcome will be an Aberdeen Ministry. Randolph looks very ill, though he says that he is pretty well. He is taking digitalis for his heart, and says he is certain that the late hours in the House of Commons will knock him up. I suspect that we shall not have to count upon him long as a political factor. I advised him to go to India as Governor-General, or as the Governor of a Province, for he is very hard up pecuniarily.

What is the real feeling in the country, I do not know, but I

have in the last fortnight attended some of the meetings of the nonentities, who are contesting the Metropolitan Constituencies, and here you are first, and the rest nowhere. The Whigs seem to have disappeared entirely. My impression is that they have all gone over to the Conservatives, and that the Whig leaders are—if the country is to be judged by the metropolis—entirely without followers. When you allude to Goschen, there are groans, when you allude to Hartington there is silence; and you have to get up a cheer for the G.O.M. by dwelling upon his noble heart, and that sort of trash. I think, however, that the Conservatives will get more seats than we anticipate in London.

By the way, I do not think that the alliance of Randolph with the Irish is going on very smoothly. He complained to me that it was impossible to trust Parnell, and that the Maamtrasna business had been sprung, as a surprise. Before the Conservatives came in, Parnell told me that he would support the Conservatives on no Coercion Bill, a scheme for buying out the landlords, and money expended in public works. No sooner were they in, than he told me, that the feeling in Ireland was so strong for home rule, that it must be pushed forward. My own experience of Parnell is, that he never makes a bargain without intending to get out of it, and that he has either a natural love of treachery, or considers that promises are not binding when made to the Saxon.

Pray don't say anything about the G.O.M.'s endeavour to square the Irish, but I thought that it might be useful for you to know what he is aiming at.

Would it not be possible to have one grand bill for local government in both islands, and settling the difference between local and Imperial Sessions? It might be made so as to oblige the English Conservatives to oppose it in their own interests, and sufficiently strong to make it difficult for the Irish to reject it on the second reading.

Yours truly,  
H. LABOUCHERE

From this letter it appears that Labouchere at Mr Gladstone's own request was the channel of communication between Mr Gladstone and Parnell. The letters on Mr Gladstone's side were all written by Herbert Gladstone but with an intimation that

when he spoke of his father's opinion the language used was to be taken as being the words of Mr Gladstone himself.<sup>1</sup>

These negotiations went on continuously until the Conservatives were turned out and the new Government formed, and were carried on apparently behind the backs and without the knowledge of any of Mr Gladstone's colleagues: indeed it will be seen that Mr Gladstone went out of his way expressly to deny their existence in a subsequent letter.

October 7. I went to Hawarden at Mr Gladstone's request and passed a night there. In the afternoon of the first day we went for a walk in the woods in the course of which the conversation was chiefly on the Irish question. At that time I assumed that we should come back with a majority over the Irish and the Conservatives combined, and I urged upon Mr Gladstone that in that case our policy would be to offer a land bill and local government without saying anything about Home Rule. I thought that the Irish must support us in these two measures and that in this way we could carry on the Government for two or more years. That was enough to look forward to and possibly we might find other reforms and legislation on which we could work together. Parnell might be again willing to take up the National Councils scheme. If not, and he insisted on extreme views, we could always fight him and dissolve on the question, when I believed we should obtain an increased majority.

<sup>1</sup> On September 26, 1891, Chamberlain wrote to Dilke: 'I have proof that at the very time when Mr G. wrote to me that he had no communication with Parnell, there was an active correspondence going on between H. Gladstone at Hawarden, Labouchere and Healey [sic]. The correspondence between Herbert (later Viscount) Gladstone and Labouchere is mentioned in the former's *After Thirty Years*, p. 287. Herbert Gladstone would presumably not have admitted that his letters to Labouchere were in any way authorized by his father. He appears to have refused permission for the publication of this correspondence in A. L. Thorold's *Life of Henry Labouchere*, which contains a large selection from the correspondence between Labouchere and Chamberlain. The versions of Labouchere's letters to Chamberlain given by Thorold are however, based not on the originals but on imperfectly accurate typed copies made by Chamberlain's secretary in 1913. In a letter to Mrs O'Shea, dated December 16, 1885, and printed in J. L. Hammond's *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, p. 454, Gladstone denied that he was in communication with Labouchere.

Mr Gladstone did not offer much criticism of this proposal, but he referred several times to the difficulties of carrying on the Government in the face of the opposition of eighty-six Irishmen of the stamp of the Nationalist members, and expressed his doubt whether Parnell would ever go back to the National Councils scheme. (I wrote, October 9, to Dilke: 'He . . . said he was more than ever impressed with the advantages of the Central Council scheme and had written strongly to that effect to Hartington.'))

He also suggested that perhaps the Conservative Government would be prepared to go in the direction of Home Rule.

He did not say a word about the negotiations which were then going on between him and members of the Irish Party.

The next day I had an interview of some hours with him in the library which was wholly confined to questions raised in connection with his Manifesto and the Unauthorized Programme.

I pointed out that according to his Manifesto the first business would be local government in England and Scotland, and I urged that this must include powers to local authorities to acquire land for allotments and small holdings. If that were granted, I saw no difficulty in joining the Government, as I had already accepted as entirely satisfactory his own statement of his intention to review the incidence of taxation, and I was also prepared to accept his suggestion with regard to free education that there should be a committee to consider the whole subject. If, therefore, the concession which I asked were made in connection with the Local Government Bill, the four main points of the Unauthorized Programme would all be dealt with.

Mr Gladstone discussed in some detail the various questions thus raised. He expressed his doubts as to the desirability of free education but seemed to make no great objection to the proposals for increasing the powers to local authorities.

Nothing was said on this occasion about the Irish question but almost at the close of the interview, Mr Gladstone said, 'I think I ought to tell you that it is not my intention to remain much longer in public life. I have as you know long wished to retire. I have been induced by the representations of yourself

and my other colleagues to remain at the head of the party much longer than I wished or intended. I have carried you through the Franchise Bill and I am now going to stand at your head for the General Election; but as soon as you are fairly started in the new Parliament, and in a very few months, I propose to hand over the leadership to Hartington.' I protested against such a decision pointing out that his leadership undoubtedly kept the party together and that if he were to retire it would be much more difficult for Hartington and myself to yield, the one to the other, than it was for either, or both of us, to yield to him. I did not think at the time that he was likely to maintain his expressed intention to resign, but it seemed to me indirectly a proof that he did not seriously contemplate a Home Rule programme with which, of course, any suggestion of resignation would have been entirely inconsistent.

On November 12 Labouchere informed me that he had passed on to Hawarden a communication from Healy asking in effect for the details of Mr Gladstone's views as to a Home Rule or local government scheme.

November 16. Labouchere wrote with the reply from Hawarden to Healy's inquiry:

*Private*

10, Queen Anne's Gate,  
St. James's Park.  
November 16, [1885].

My dear Chamberlain,

This is the proposal to the Irish, which I forward. It is in reply to Healy's last communication.

'If we win it seems that the right course would be to summon a kind of conference between the Irish Representatives and the Liberal Party to discuss the position of the Irish Government. On the basis, which would be arranged previously of

1. The maintenance of the unity and integrity of the Empire.
2. An Irish Chamber for Irish affairs.
3. Irish representatives at Westminster only for Imperial affairs.



4. The equitable division of Imperial charges by fixed proportions.

5. Protection of the minority in Ireland.'

You will see that the question of the land as being under the control of the Irish chamber is shirked.

I have a long letter from T. P. O'Connor about the Irish vote in England. He (Healy tells me) is very strong in favour of throwing it for the Conservatives. I suspect that he has been bought. I am sure that £500 would have bought him, from what I know of my friend.

Yours truly,  
H. LABOUCHERE

December 5. He communicated the contents of a letter he had received from Herbert Gladstone to be sent on to Healy. Herbert Gladstone says:

Will Parnell propose a Home Rule amendment?<sup>1</sup> If so, do you know, or can you find out its terms? The Tories cannot or will not satisfy the Parnellites in the matter of Home Rule. The Government may try to purchase Irish support with hard cash, but they will not find this an easy matter. I am confident that my father will deal generously, so far as he is concerned, with Irish members in regard to the Irish Government, but he will, I am equally sure, resolutely oppose any proposal designed merely to stave off the main question for party convenience at the taxpayer's expense.

On December 14,<sup>2</sup> Labouchere visited me at Highbury. On this occasion I told him plainly that I was not prepared to go beyond National Councils.

<sup>1</sup> To the Queen's Speech.

<sup>2</sup> According to Chamberlain's letters to Labouchere of December 7 and 11, 1885, the latter was expected at Highbury (Chamberlain's Birmingham home) on December 16. If Labouchere did visit Highbury on the 16th he was presumably there when Chamberlain that evening received the news of the Hawarden 'kite', announcing Gladstone's new Irish policy. (Garvin, *op. cit.*, ii. 137.) This is confirmed by a letter from Labouchere to Herbert Gladstone, describing Chamberlain's reception of the news, quoted in Charles Mallet, *Herbert Gladstone: A Memoir*, pp. 120-1.

On December 18 I received the following letter from Mr Gladstone. It is impossible to reconcile the paragraph beginning 'Be *very incredulous*' with Labouchere's account of the negotiations which at that moment were in full progress.

*Secret*

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

December 18, 1885.

My dear Chamberlain,

I thank you very much for your references to me in your speech last night.

In this really serious crisis, we must all make efforts to work together; and I gladly recognize your effort.

Moreover, reading as well as writing hastily, I think we are very much in accord.

Both reflection, and information, lead me to think that time is very precious, and that the hour glass has begun to run for a definitive issue.

But I am certainly and strongly of opinion that only a Government can act, that especially *this* Government should act, and that we should now be helping and encouraging them to act, as far as we legitimately can.

In reply to a proposal of the Central News to send me an interviewer I have this morning telegraphed to London—'From my public declarations at Edinburgh *with respect to the Government*, you will easily see I have no communication to make.'

Be *very incredulous* as to any statements about my views and opinions. Rest assured I have done and said *nothing* which in any way points to negotiation or separate action. The time may come, but I hope it will not. At present I think most men, but I do not include you, are in too great a hurry to make up their minds. Much may happen before (say) January 12.<sup>1</sup> The first thing of all is to know *what will the Government do*. I know they have been in communication with Parnellites, and I hope with Parnell.

I remain always,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

<sup>1</sup> The date of the meeting of the new Parliament.

I replied, December 19 :

*Private*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
December 19, 1885.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I am greatly obliged by your kind letter and am especially glad that you approve of my speech on Thursday.

Speaking, as I was compelled to do without complete information I was very anxious not to do harm.

It is my earnest wish to be able to give you the most loyal support in any proposals you may ultimately see your way to make, but I am much relieved to find that you agree with me in thinking that it is the duty of the Government, which rests entirely on Irish support, to announce its policy in the first instance; and that the Liberal party is not called upon to make suggestions at present.

I do not expect any satisfactory result from the present Government.

If it be true that you have laid proposals before the Queen<sup>1</sup> which have been communicated to Lord Salisbury, there must have been, on the part of the Prime Minister or his Colleagues, a flagrant breach of confidence; and it is evident that they have resolved to raise the cry of the 'Empire in danger' as the Church has not sufficiently served their turn.

Whatever may be thought of the morality of their conduct, I have no doubt of its wisdom from the purely party point of view. If there were a dissolution on this question, and the Liberal party or its leader were thought to be pledged to a separate Parliament in Dublin, it is my belief that we should sustain a tremendous defeat. The English working classes, for various reasons, are distinctly hostile to Home Rule carried to this extent, and I do not think it would be possible to convert them before a General Election.

I fear that with the expectations now raised in Ireland, it will not be possible to satisfy the Irish Party with any proposals that are likely to receive the general support of English Liberals.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently a reference to Gladstone's letter to the Queen, May 23, 1885, printed in P. Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr Gladstone*, ii. 354.

If I am right, we must wait until Parnell has broken with the Tories, when there will be pressure upon him to come to terms with us, and he may perhaps moderate his demands. I confess, however, that I cannot feel sanguine of any satisfactory agreement.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

As regards the reported communication of Mr Gladstone to the Queen it was subsequently denied that any such communication had been made.

On December 19 Labouchere wrote a full account of an interview with Healy in which the latter had minimized Parnell's influence and had asserted that he, with Dillon, Harrington, O'Brien and McCarthy settled everything for the Party. He communicated his idea of a Home Rule Bill and land reform.

December 23. Labouchere wrote again:

Has this occurred to you? The Whigs evidently will not stand Mr G.'s proposals. If you therefore were to rally to them you would clear the nest of these nuisances; and, as Mr G. cannot last very long become the leader of the opposition or of the Government—a consummation that we all want.

Labouchere returned to this in many letters and pressed me strongly to use Mr Gladstone in order to get rid of the Whigs and the Irish at the same time, and so leave the field open for a Radical Home Government [*sic*], of which I was to be the leader, with perhaps Mr Henry Labouchere as Mayor of the Palace.

On December 24 Labouchere said that he had seen Harcourt who appeared to be sitting on the fence. "What I am thinking of," he said, "is that if the Irish find that they could get nothing, they would resort again to dynamite." I told him that I thought that *his* life would not be worth a week's purchase. Was there ever such a timorous Jumbo?

December 25. I heard from Harcourt to whom I had written some account of my interview with Labouchere. He says: 'I am glad you have made up your mind to say, "Get thee behind me Satan."' He urged that we should wait and see how things

went, and above all try and keep the Tory Government in as long as we could. 'I am fast coming to the paradoxical and hopeless conclusion that nothing but the grant of Home Rule will ever convince the English people that we ought to have fought to the death rather than concede it.'

He also told me that Gladstone had met Balfour at the Duke of Westminster's and had preached to him the expediency of the Conservative Government taking up Home Rule.

On December 25 Labouchere writes:

This is Churchill's statement about the Queen. When they came in they were told that there was a Home Rule scheme of Mr G.'s and it was shown to Salisbury. I suspect that it is true, for no sooner was Mr G. out than Herbert began, on the ground that his father wanted exactly to know the Irish minimum, in order to have time to treat the matter with his friends.

I place as the basis of Mr G.'s action an almost insane desire to come into office. Now he knows that so far as *he* is concerned, this can only be done by squaring the Irish. At 76, a waiting policy may be a patriotic one, but it is one of personal effacement. This is not precisely the line of our revered leader.

On the 26th he says:

Hawarden writes:

'Nothing will induce my father to shift from his position, until the Government have spoken, or the Irish party in public terminates their alliance.'

On December 30 he sent me the account of another letter from Hawarden to be communicated to Healy. Mr Gladstone was still determined not to state particulars of his plan until the Government had declared themselves and still anxious to know Parnell's line.

In the course of the correspondence I had told Labouchere that I thought our policy was to wait and keep ourselves absolutely free. The probability was that the alliance between the Tories and the Parnellites would come to an end at the beginning of the Session, especially if the Government found

themselves compelled to bring in a new coercion bill. In that case the Parnellites would be enforced to join us and would be likely to be more moderate in their demands than if we were to seek them. They might in such a case go back to the proposals for National Councils (or some modified form of them) which Parnell had accepted some months before.<sup>1</sup>

On this Herbert Gladstone writes:

Chamberlain does not appear to realize in the least how impossible it would be for my father to adopt his policy of waiting. If the Liberal Party chooses to break up over an Irish Parliament it cannot be helped. But for him to think only of a temporary cohesion of men, not strong enough to take decided action on the one essential question of the day—such cohesion to be kept until the Irish question becomes sufficiently urgent to compel attention is a poor as well as a disastrous line to take. R. C.'s<sup>2</sup> disclosures to you *re* A. B. [Balfour]<sup>3</sup> prove that he does not stick at a breach of confidence of the first order.<sup>4</sup>

This last sentence must refer to Mr Gladstone's interview with Arthur Balfour at the Duke of Westminster's.

On December 29 Harcourt wrote, in view of a meeting with Hartington, James and Goschen at Devonshire House in that week. He says:

The great thing you should meditate upon is *what is to [ ]<sup>5</sup> course after Home Rule is rejected and how is the fight to be fought out?* I confess that is the consideration which gives me pause. Can we conduct the conflict with Mr G. and his plan *outstanding* against us and unrevealed—with people saying when

<sup>1</sup> As described in Chap. vi, above, Parnell had in January, 1885, put forward through O'Shea a plan for an Irish 'Central Board' with administrative functions. But he had never accepted Chamberlain's 'proposals for National Councils' with legislative powers. See Parnell's letter to O'Shea on this subject, January 13, 1885, printed in Garvin, *op. cit.*, i. 589-90.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Randolph Churchill.

<sup>3</sup> Labouchere's parenthesis.

<sup>4</sup> This passage from Herbert Gladstone's letter to Labouchere is quoted in the latter's letter to Chamberlain of December 30, 1885.

<sup>5</sup> Word or words omitted from MS. of Harcourt's letter. The omitted words were probably 'be our'.

we come to extremities, 'Why did you not try G.'s plan?' That for me is the great danger. We must do all we can to have this card played on the table and not to have it always behind us. I foresee that it may be necessary to let him try his hand so that no one can say all methods had not been exhausted.

1886

On January 1, 1886, Labouchere writes:

The real enemies of the Radicals are the Whigs, and they are essentially your enemies. . . . All this is why I still hold that the Radical game is to go with Mr G. on Irish matters, and to use him, in order to shunt them [the Irish]<sup>1</sup> and, if possible, the Whigs—not that this course is not full of danger, but it seems to me to present less danger than any other.

We had asked Mr Gladstone to come to town in order that his late colleagues might confer with him. On January 4 Harcourt wrote as follows:

*Secret*

7, Grafton Street.

January 4, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

Our polite invitation has been more or less civilly declined, and Mr G. 'when he comes up to London on the 11th will receive anyone at 4 p.m. who wishes to see him'. I think if we go we should go in a *posse comitatus* and not singly.

Things are evidently a good deal mixed as well as strained. I have discovered to-day on the most authentic information that the *démarche* of Herbert was a deliberate counter move to Dilke's foolish speech,<sup>2</sup> which\*as you know gave great offence to the

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's parenthesis.

<sup>2</sup> 'The *démarche* of Herbert' refers of course to Herbert Gladstone's famous announcement of his father's new Irish policy, generally known as the Hawarden 'kite'. The speech by Dilke, referred to, was delivered, after prior consultation with Chamberlain, at Chelsea on December 12, 1885, when he argued in favour of allowing Lord Salisbury's Conservative Government to remain in office.

Party generally, but especially to Hawarden. At the latter place it was regarded and was no doubt represented as the outward and visible sign of a plot believed to be hatched at Birmingham to keep the G.O.M. out of office. The chivalrous Herbert therefore thought it his duty to defeat this plan and took his measures accordingly. This you may depend upon it is the true history of this extraordinary and mischievous proceeding. It is a good illustration of how one folly begets another and one piece of mischief has the most unexpected results. If Dilke had only held his tongue 'the fire would not have burned the stick and the stick would not have beaten the dog and the dog would not have worried the cat, etc. etc.', and we should not all have been in the very infernal mess in which we find ourselves, all at loggerheads because one man chose to play his own game off his own bat.

The only thing now to do is to wipe up the nasty mess as soon and as well as we can.

Yours truly,

W. V. HARCOURT

[PS.] Beware of Labby. He talks to everybody, writes to everybody, and betrays everybody.

On January 7 Harcourt wrote deprecating any intention not to go to see Mr Gladstone on the 11th and urged me not to sulk. He said:

I shall go on the 11th, not at all to be talked over, but to hear what is to be said, and to emphasize the lions in the path, and paint them as large as possible. After all there is some glimmering of common sense left even in this very degenerate age.

I think it is clear that it has been discovered that this cock will not fight. Childers is obviously 'backing down', and I have no doubt that the hounds will now be whipped off.

January 17. Labouchere wrote that he was not certain that Mr Gladstone and the Irish would come to terms. He proposed that an amendment in vague terms should be moved to the Address to the effect that something must be done. The Irish must vote for it and if there is a dissolution would turn over their votes in the constituencies to the Liberal Party.



By this time it had become perfectly certain that the Liberals would come to the Session determined to try their strength and that nothing we could do would prevent the Government from being defeated if the Irish deserted them.

Under these circumstances I thought the best course would be to turn them out on a Resolution devised in connection with English politics, which would leave us unpledged, and upon which all the Liberals might unite. I sent the following memorandum to Mr O'Shea to be communicated to Mr Parnell<sup>1</sup>:

[*Memorandum*]

I am not at all clear that it is desirable to turn out the Government at this moment. Public opinion, excited by the intentions attributed to Mr Gladstone and by the discussion which has taken place upon them is not in a favourable condition for considering even reasonable proposals for any settlement of the Irish legislative difficulty. It would be a great advantage to have more complete evidence of the failure of the Government to deal with the crisis.

If they remain in they must make proposals for restoring order. If these proposals are inadequate they will provoke disaffection amongst their own supporters. If on the contrary they are drastic they will enable the public to appreciate the nature of the alternative which must be adopted if the idea of concession is absolutely rejected.

A discussion on Procedure will also be likely to make clear the serious nature of the situation and the weakness of the Government.<sup>2</sup>

The state of the Revenue will necessitate an extraordinary Budget, the unpopularity of which will fall on the Ministers proposing it.

For all these reasons the fall of the Government if it could possibly be avoided would be undesirable on party and tactical grounds.

It is evident that the Government are aware of this and are desirous of precipitating their own defeat. It is also evident that

<sup>1</sup> On January 22, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> An allusion to the new rules of procedure announced by Lord Randolph Churchill.

they propose if possible to force the issue on the Irish question, in the hope that an appeal to the country would give them a majority.

If it be out of the question to maintain them in power it would seem to be desirable in the interests of a fair solution of the Irish question that the defeat should be brought about on some other issue; and Mr Collings's amendment offers a favourable opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Parnell must judge for himself the line that it would be to his interest to take. It is impossible that Mr Gladstone should give him the assurances for which he asks. If Mr Gladstone were to come in and immediately propose a scheme of Home Rule it is almost certain that in the present state of opinion he would be defeated, and an appeal to the country would in all probability result in a Tory majority.

Mr Parnell's language last night pointed to the land question as one of primary importance, the preliminary settlement of which was almost necessary before any large extension of local government could be conceded.

The question is, would Mr Parnell co-operate with a Radical or Liberal Government in the endeavour to make a final arrangement by means of some large operation of land purchase, without pressing for an immediate consideration of Home Rule proposals?

In any case these proposals would have to come in the first instance from the Irish party. Is Mr Parnell prepared with a definite scheme? and in this case would he be satisfied to submit it to a large and representative Committee?

On January 22 Labouchere wrote to the effect that Parnell was inclined to turn the Government out on Collings's amendment without pledges from Mr Gladstone except that he would go on and form a Government if necessary without Hartington and Goschen.

In this letter he said that Parnell had declared that he must have an Assembly for local matters to be called a Parliament with control of the police in order to keep the Fenians in order.

A meeting of Mr Gladstone's last Cabinet was held at Lord Granville's where, however, Hartington was not present.

<sup>1</sup> Regretting the absence from the Queen's Speech of any proposal to afford agricultural labourers facilities for obtaining allotments and small-holdings.

At this meeting it was agreed to support Collings's amendment and as the Irish voted for it the Government were defeated by a large majority and immediately resigned.<sup>1</sup>

In looking back on the transactions at the end of 1885, I have always found it difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion as to the motives which prompted Mr Gladstone's action. Three, however, have been suggested and may all have weighed with him

I. He was undoubtedly desirous of regaining office and must have been impressed with the impossibility of forming a strong government without a complete understanding with the Irish Parnellite Party.

II. He found it difficult to reconcile the views of the two sections of his Party. If he adopted Hartington's view and supported him it was certain that he would lose his influence in the country and be compelled to retire.

If, on the other hand, he accepted my proposals he was thereby giving up the initiative and following where he had been accustomed to lead the way.

He may have felt, under these circumstances, that the introduction of the Irish Question, in a form which would throw every other subject into the background, would at least relieve him of the difficulty of choosing between the Unauthorized and the Authorized Programmes.

III. He seems to have convinced himself that the Conservatives were playing with Home Rule, and he may have been afraid that if he did not quickly enter the lists they would outbid him. He proposed no doubt to Arthur Balfour that the Conservatives should themselves undertake the task; but by that time he must have known that they were not likely to consent, and, even if they had, his position as a critic would have been a very strong one.

Another question which arises is, at what precise time did Mr Gladstone make up his mind to offer to the Irish an Irish Parliament?

I have pointed out that such an intention would have been

<sup>1</sup> On January 27, 1886.

entirely inconsistent with his language to me at Hawarden. On the other hand it appears to have been the distinct subject of the communications carried on through Labouchere and Herbert Gladstone.

It will be seen when I come to deal with the formation of the Government of 1886, that, even then, Mr Gladstone told me distinctly that he had not made up his mind definitely to any plan, and only desired an enquiry into the possibility of meeting the Irish demand.

In these circumstances it is not easy to fix the exact date when Mr Gladstone 'found salvation'.

### 1885

The other events of the year 1885 may be briefly dismissed.

The Redistribution Bill was passed according to arrangement early in the Session.

After the fall of Khartoum public opinion was strongly in favour of an expedition to smash the Mahdi, and the Government at first announced their intention of sending Lord Wolseley forward with these instructions. In the meantime, an expedition was prepared against Osman Digna, and the plan for a railway from Suakim to Berber was sent to the former place. These preparations, however, were relaxed, and the whole scheme of an expedition was finally abandoned when the troubles with Russia began.

The contest about the Afghan frontier was one of great complexity, and I have never felt completely satisfied that we had a sufficient *casus belli*.

On March 17 I circulated a minute on the subject to the Cabinet, but I was in a minority—I believe of one.

### [Minute]

1. I have now read the papers circulated by the India Office. I have found the Russian case much stronger than I expected,

and I do not think it would be possible to justify a war arising out of the situation as presented in these documents.

2. I came to the consideration of the subject with a distinct prejudice against the Russians, and I still believe that they have concealed objects dangerous to our Indian Empire.

But they have not shown their hand sufficiently as yet, and they have a plausible defence for their action which would undoubtedly be accepted by a considerable party in this country, and which would weaken the hands of any Government which pressed matters to extremity.

The time has passed when the Liberal party can go to war on circumstantial evidence, and on mere suspicion of intentions which are skilfully cloaked by plausible professions.

3. In the present case the question at issue is the possession of what has been called 'debatable territory'—a sort of No Man's land—of which so little is known that even the Ameer of Afghanistan was unable a year or two ago to say positively whether he had any claims to it or not.

He probably would not have cared to assert or maintain any authority over it if it had not been for the recent advance of Russia and the immediate danger to his independence caused by the establishment of a great Power in close proximity to his undoubted territory.

4. Rightly or wrongly (and I think the policy is open to some doubt) we are pledged to assist the Ameer in resisting aggression. Can we say that the advance of Russia constitutes the aggression that we have undertaken to resist?

If the matter could be regarded as a law-suit I should say that the Afghans had a very good case and that there was plenty of evidence to go to the Court that the whole of the debatable land had for a long time been inhabited by Tribes owing allegiance to Herat, and consequently to the Ameer of Afghanistan, whenever the ruler of the latter country has established his rule over Herat.

But on the other hand the Russians, as defendants, would have ground for asserting that the recognition of Afghan supremacy by the Tribes has been intermittent, and indefinite, and does not constitute such an admission as to justify the claim of ownership by the Ameer or to bar the rights derived by the Russians from conquest or from agreement with the Turkomans.

5. My own view is therefore that although we have a good

*prima facie* case, the Russians have also a plausible answer, and that under these circumstances the Liberal party would not support the Government in extreme measures.

6. I am aware that the question of ownership does not conclude the argument. If the debatable territory is absolutely necessary to secure a strategic frontier for Afghanistan, it might be expedient to press the somewhat shadowy claims of the Ameer to the fullest extent. They are at any rate as good as any that Russia can advance.

But on this point it appears that the military advisers hold that the line proposed by us is a weak one, and that no sufficient scientific frontier is to be found without going further north than anything at present suggested.

If there is any doubt on this point the idea of war becomes still more indefensible, since it would be undertaken not only on behalf of a doubtful right but also to secure a doubtful good.

7. It is also worth considering in this relation that the future prospects of peace may be seriously imperilled by the conduct of the lawless and predatory inhabitants of the debatable territory, and that incursions and outrages on the border can best be restrained by giving to a strong Power full control over the nomad tribes.

If, therefore, the possession of such places as Penjdeh is not essential to the security of Afghanistan itself, there are good grounds for desiring that Russia should assume the responsibility of keeping order and should exercise authority over the whole lands grazed by the Sarik Turkomans who are already partly under her rule.

8. The situation has been strained by the alleged attempt by Russia to anticipate the decision of the Commission, appointed at her suggestion, and by the recent occupation of territory which was to be the subject of the enquiry.

I cannot doubt that the delay interposed by the Russian Government and the action of Colonel Alihanoff have been dictated by this desire to secure the possession which is nine points of the law.

Unfortunately, in this matter Russia also has a plausible case.

The Indian Government advised the Ameer to go to Pul-i-Khatun and to 'conciliate' the Turkomans of Penjdeh, while the Commission was under discussion. The Afghans occupied Penjdeh in June and the Russians retaliated by going to Pul-i-Khatun.

Later on the Afghans sent a few soldiers to Sari Yazi and

immediately the Russians jumped at the opportunity and seized Akrobad, Zulficar, etc.

I do not doubt that they were actuated by a predetermination to settle the question in dispute in their own favour, but they have some kind of excuse, and the case against them is not so clear as to give us an indefeasible plea of bad faith and consequent justification for pushing matters even to the extreme of war.

9. In the present state of affairs I am convinced that if the Commission were ever to meet, there is no probability and hardly a possibility of agreement. Both Commissions would be under strict instructions—practically instructions not to agree—and the tension would not be relieved and might be made worse by the inevitable conflict of opinion.

10. What then is to be done?

One of the greatest embarrassments of the situation is the uncertainty as to the feelings and intentions of the Ameer. We are not sure that he may not make friends with Russia at any moment, and in view of the doubts expressed by Sir P. Lumsden, I do not feel comfortable at the idea of marching troops through his country or of helping him to arm his own soldiers with the latest and most approved pattern of English rifles.

But there can be no danger in conferring with him as to the proper strategic line of defence for Afghanistan, and then furnishing him with the plans and money and heavy guns necessary to make this line an efficient barrier to Russian aggression.

At the worst the money will only be thrown away—the preparations cannot be used in any event against ourselves. If the Ameer is loyal and friendly he will readily accept the assistance offered and will be enabled by it to present a real barrier to threatened advance.

If he declines we may reconsider the whole situation and perhaps decide to defend India on its own frontier without care for anything beyond it.

In the first case we shall have done what is necessary to secure the essential objects of our arrangement with the Ameer, and we may then give up the attempt to settle the question of the debatable territory by means of a Commission and propose as an alternative to refer the matter to arbitration. It will not be of much consequence to us what the decision is.

In the second case, we shall have no further interest either in

Afghanistan or in the debatable territory, and we shall be left free to employ the breathing time which will remain to us, in strengthening our own frontier and making all necessary preparations to concentrate all the forces at our disposal, at the shortest notice, for its defence.

On March 30 the advance of the Russians, and their surprise and defeat of the Afghans, brought matters to a head and on April 27 the vote of credit was proposed.

On June 5 a peaceful arrangement was definitely arrived at and announced to the House of Commons.

On June 8 the Government were defeated on Childers's Budget at a time when, as I have already stated, the Cabinet were greatly divided on the Irish Question, and Dilke and myself had actually sent in our resignations.

I note that in October Mr Gladstone publicly denied that the Government had courted defeat, and also denied that three members of the Cabinet had practically resigned their seats before the division. I do not know who was the third member (Dilke says it was Lefevre—see memorandum<sup>1</sup>) to whom the report referred, but it was certainly true as regards Dilke and myself.

I spoke before the resignation on the question of Egypt, and afterwards on the Medical Relief Bill, and also on a motion of Privilege, raised on some expressions in a speech of Bright's at Birmingham.

I also published in December an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, signed 'A Radical', chiefly on the position of the Irish Question.<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn of this year the charges of immorality which were brought against Sir Charles Dilke caused his retirement from public life and prevented him from taking an active part in the later discussions and correspondence which took place on the Irish Question.

<sup>1</sup> Added by Chamberlain in margin of MS. Shaw Lefevre resigned on May 21, 1885. (Add. MSS. 44153, f. 207.)

<sup>2</sup> This article, entitled 'A Radical View of the Irish Crisis', in fact appeared in the February, 1886, number of the *Fortnightly Review*.



## CHAPTER VIII

1886 (continued)

PARLIAMENT met on January 12 for the verification of returns. The Queen's Speech was delivered on the 21st, and on the 26th the Government were defeated. On January 30 I received a summons from Mr Gladstone whom I found at Lady Edward Cavendish's. He at once asked me to accept the position of First Lord of the Admiralty in the new Government. I told him that I should have some hesitation in accepting that particular post but that I would not allow any personal feeling to stand in the way.<sup>1</sup> It was, however, necessary that I should understand his position in reference to the Irish question before I could give any answer to his invitation. I reminded him that there had been rumours of his intentions which he had contradicted and which I hoped were entirely unfounded, as, if he had made up his mind to establish a separate Parliament in Dublin, it would be impossible for me to follow him. Mr Gladstone replied that he had not made up his mind to any plan or proposal at present; that all he had determined on was to institute an enquiry into the whole question and to see how far it was practicable to satisfy the demands of the majority of the Irish people. Neither he nor any of his colleagues would be pledged to any conclusion. He then put into my hands the minute which follows:

*Secret.* I propose to examine whether it is or is not practicable to comply with the desire widely prevalent in Ireland and testified by the return of 85 out of her 103 representatives, for the estab-

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's personal reason for not wishing to take the Admiralty lay in the large amount of entertaining expected at Admiralty House. He was a widower, and his daughter Beatrice, then in her early twenties, had only recently taken over the duties of head of his household, following the marriage of an aunt. (Note by Sir Austen Chamberlain, December 7, 1932.)

lishment by Statute of a Legislative Body to sit in Dublin and to deal with Irish as distinguished from Imperial affairs, in such a manner as to be just to each of the three Kingdoms, equitable with reference to every class of the people of Ireland, conducive to the social order and harmony of that country and calculated to support and consolidate the unity of the Empire on the combined basis of Imperial authority and mutual attachment.

I told him that I had always been in favour of some enquiry into the Irish demands and had regretted that Butt's motion for a Committee<sup>1</sup> had been refused by the Liberal Party. I should therefore be perfectly ready to join him in such an examination as he proposed, but that, as at present advised, I was entirely opposed to the idea of an Irish Parliament and that I thought a good opportunity presented itself of renewing negotiations with the Irish Nationalists on the basis of the proposals for National Councils. I pointed out that we might come to an agreement on the questions of the Land, of Education, and of Municipal Government, and that these would occupy a considerable time before it would be possible even to consider the question of any more extended local government. Mr Gladstone asked whether I intended to prejudge the result of the enquiry which he proposed to undertake or whether I considered that I was in a position to give an impartial consideration to the results of the enquiry. I said that I did not consider that I was committed to a final judgment although I thought it only fair to tell him what were my present views. Mr Gladstone then repeated his invitation and said that in what I had told him he saw no impediment to my joining his Government. He further told me that he intended to ask John Morley to be Chief Secretary. I said that it seemed to me an excellent appointment although I very much regretted that he was not able to offer the post to one of the Irish members as it had always been my opinion that they ought to be induced to take responsibility for the Irish policy of the Government so far as they agreed with it. If we were able to arrange this, so far as the three items which I had named were concerned, they might

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Butt's motion, proposed in 1874, for a committee to consider the parliamentary relations between Great Britain and Ireland.

help us to carry these through leaving anything further entirely to the future. Mr Gladstone also told me that Lord Granville would not again be made Secretary for Foreign Affairs as his management of this department in the last government had not been altogether a success. I asked for a little time for further consideration and Mr Gladstone consented to wait for my answer for a few hours. Later in the afternoon I brought him a draft of my written reply. At his suggestion I added the paragraph marked 'A' and the same evening forwarded him my acceptance as follows:

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

January 30, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I have availed myself of the opportunity you have kindly afforded me to consider further your offer of a seat in your Government.

I recognize the justice of your view that the question of Ireland is paramount to all others and must first engage your attention. The statement of your intention to examine whether it is practicable to comply with the wishes of the majority of the Irish people as testified by the return of 85 representatives of the Nationalist Party, does not go beyond your previous public declarations; while the conditions which you attach to the possibility of such compliance seem to me adequate and are also in accordance with your repeated public utterances.

But I have already thought it due to you to say that, according to my present judgment, it will not be found possible to conciliate these conditions with the establishment of a National Legislative body sitting in Dublin; and I have explained my own preference for an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members on the basis of a more limited scheme of local government coupled with proposals for a settlement of the land, and perhaps also of the Education, question.

You have been kind enough, after hearing these opinions to repeat your request that I should join your Government and you have explained that in this case I shall retain 'unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection' on any scheme that may ultimately be proposed and that the full consideration of such minor proposals as I have referred to, as an alternative to any larger arrangement, will not be excluded by you.

[A] On the other hand I have no difficulty in assuring you of my readiness to give an unprejudiced examination to any more extensive proposals that may be made with an anxious desire that the result may be more favourable than I am at present able to anticipate.

In these circumstances and with the most earnest hope that I may be able in any way to assist you in your difficult work, I beg to accept the offer you have made to submit my name to Her Majesty for a post in the new Government.

I am, my dear Mr Gladstone,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

On January 31 I asked him to see me again as to the office I was to hold. I explained my objections to taking the control of one of the great spending and military departments. He then asked me what office I would prefer. I mentioned the Colonial Office, but, at the same time, told him that I would not allow this question to interfere and if it were not convenient to him to make another arrangement I would take the First Lordship or any other office he liked to offer. He made no reply to my suggestion of the Colonial Office<sup>1</sup> but asked me whether I would go back to the Board of Trade. I said 'Yes, if he desired it,' [*sic*] but I should prefer a change. The matter was left unsettled, but next day I saw Hatcourt and told him what had passed. In the course of conversation I said I would be willing to take the Local Government Board as it would give me the opportunity of preparing the measure for local government which I assumed would be the first work of the Ministry. This offer was communicated to Mr Gladstone and afterwards accepted by him. In the course of the subsequent controversy on the Home Rule Bill, Herbert Gladstone set afloat a statement that my action was due to irritation at having been refused the Colonial Office. The insinuation was a gross breach of private confidence and was entirely unfounded, as, while expressing an individual preference, I made it perfectly clear to Mr Gladstone that I would agree

<sup>1</sup> According to Dilke, when Chamberlain expressed a wish to take the Colonial Office, Gladstone replied, 'Oh! A Secretary of State'. (*Life of Dilke*, ii. 205.)

to settle the question of office in any way which he finally thought would best suit his convenience.

In taking the Local Government Board I asked that Jesse Collings should be given to me as Secretary. Mr Gladstone agreed but at the same time proposed to reduce the salary from £1,500 to £1,200. I protested strongly against this and also against the intention which he announced of reducing the salary of the Secretary of the Board of Trade in the same proportion. This latter office was to be offered to Broadhurst and I thought it would produce the worse effect if the offices which were to be offered—the one to the representative of the labourers, and the other to the representative of the Trades Unionists—were to be selected from all the others for a reduction. Mr Gladstone persisted, however, and made the offer to Collings with the condition of reduction attached. At my request Collings declined, and, after some further correspondence and the strenuous intervention of Sir William Harcourt, Mr Gladstone abandoned his intention for the time.

On taking office I issued my address asking for re-election. In the course of it I said:

I am ready to give an unprejudiced consideration to the claims and wishes of the majority of the Irish people, as formulated by its elected representatives. I am prepared to support any just and reasonable proposal for a final settlement, in accordance with the special necessities of the case, of the land and education questions. In connection with these subjects, I am convinced that it will be necessary to concede to the Irish people a much more extended control of their own domestic business. But I appeal to my recent speeches, both before and after the election, as evidence of my firm intention to consent to no plan which will not sufficiently guarantee the continued supremacy of the Crown in that country and the integrity of the Empire.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Gladstone wrote to me February 5 that I had 'steered among the rocks and shoals with much ability'.

On February 13, at Mr Gladstone's request, I saw him at Downing Street to have a talk on the Irish question. He asked me for

<sup>1</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, February 5, 1886.

my views and I repeated those I had expressed to him when he invited me to join the Government. I urged him to deal first with the Irish land question and then with education and municipal and county government, leaving anything more entirely for future consideration. Mr Gladstone then asked me if I had any views as to the proper solution of the land question. I told him that I had never formulated them although I had some general notions. At his request I drew up a memorandum which was subsequently circulated to the Cabinet. No discussion took place upon it nor was it referred to subsequently, but Herbert Gladstone—and I think Mr Gladstone himself—afterwards alluded to its suggestions in public speeches after the dissolution—a course which I have always thought to have been a serious breach of Cabinet confidence besides excessively unfair to me, who had only produced these rough suggestions in a hurry and in deference to Mr Gladstone's personal request.

### *Land Purchase*

Of the land of Ireland, holdings under 30 acres occupy 5,000,000 acres. The judicial rents of these properties will not exceed an average of 10s. per acre. Total amount of rent on these properties therefore = £2,500,000.

The value of the freehold does not exceed 16 years purchase = £40,000,000.

(Note. Sir Robert Hamilton tells me that this estimate is altogether too high and that for land of the kind described 12½ or even 10 years purchase would be ample. If this be so the operation would be much easier. Not only the capital sum would be less, but the advantage offered to the tenants would be very much greater.)

The interest on this capital at 3 per cent. = £1,200,000. Total amount of contributions from Imperial Funds is about £3,700,000. Of this about £3,000,000 is for Police, Education, and Dublin Castle administration. The amount at present contributed from Imperial funds to the Irish constabulary is about £1,700,000.

The operation of proposed scheme is as follows:

1. The State to give to the landlords Consols to the yearly value of £1,200,000 and to diminish local contributions to this extent.

I suggest that this should be done by withdrawing altogether the contribution from Police, which as above stated amounts to £1,700,000. The present Constabulary force should be treated entirely as part of the military garrison of Ireland, and the Army now stationed there might be reduced to a similar extent. In this way Imperial funds would be proportionately relieved. Of the £1,700,000 thus placed at the disposal of the Imperial Government £1,200,000 should be reserved for the payment of interest on the new issue of Consols, while the balance of £500,000 should be handed over to the Central Board mentioned in the next paragraph.

2. This Central Board to be elective and representative. The State to make over to it the land purchased under this scheme and the Board to receive all rents in future: the Board to be under a direct obligation to contribute in aid of local purposes a minimum sum of £1,700,000 a year, and from the balance of its income to make such further contributions as it may in its discretion decide.

3. The present Judicial rents to be reduced at once by £700,000—that is 28 per cent.

4. The Central Board will therefore receive in rents £1,800,000 and in cash from the Central Government £500,000.

It will have to pay £1,700,000 in local contributions, and will have a balance of £600,000 for expenses, Sinking Fund and further contributions to local sources. The Central Board should be compelled to establish a fixed Sinking Fund for the repayment and ultimate extinction of the loan.

5. County authorities to be established throughout Ireland and to be charged with the control of the Civil Police. Wherever this Police is provided to the satisfaction of the Central Authority, the latter to make to each authority a contribution in aid of rates to the extent of its fair proportion having regard to its rateable value.

As the contribution will be made on the basis of the present cost of the Constabulary, and as the County authority will not find it necessary to establish a force nearly as numerous or expensive there will be a distinct gain to the ratepayers which will go in reduction of other rates, or for other local purposes. In every case the County authority will have a direct advantage in creating an efficient local Police in order to be entitled to its proportion of the Central Board's contribution.

The position of the various parties to this scheme will be as follows:

(a) The State will have incurred a new liability in the shape of an addition to the debt of £40,000,000. As security for payment of interest it will retain £1,200,000 a year of the sums now paid out for the Police in Ireland. It will also be able to retain whatever amount may be yearly set aside for Sinking Fund.

(b) The Central Board will be at once placed in receipt of an income of £2,300,000 a year, while the fixed charge upon it will only be £1,700,000.

(c) The County Authorities will be charged with the obligation of providing a Police, but in return will receive a contribution which will more than cover the cost.

(d) The tenants will at once receive a permanent reduction of 28 per cent. on the Judicial rents. They will cease to pay rents to an individual landlord, but in future will pay only to a central Irish authority. In addition they may be authorized to become part owners of the land on advantageous terms, and according to some such scheme as the following:

On payment of 25% of the capital value of the land they may be allowed a reduction of the rent calculated at 6%.

On the payment of a second 25% they may receive a further reduction calculated at 5% and this would leave a permanent charge on the property calculated at 3½% on half the capital value. The result of these several transactions may be illustrated as follows:

Assuming that the tenant has a holding the capital value of which is	£100	
his present Judicial rent will be		£6. 5. 0
After the scheme comes into operation this rent will be immediately reduced to		£4. 10. 0
On payment of	£25	
in reduction of capital the future rent will be reduced to		£3. 0. 0
And on payment of a second	£25	
	<hr/>	
making in all	£50	
of the capital the rent will be reduced to		£1. 15. 0



which will then be the permanent State mortgage on the land, subject to which and to the fulfilment of any conditions which the Central Board may make in the interests of the community the tenant will be absolute owner of his land.

The above calculation is made on the assumption that 16 years purchase is to be paid for the acquisition of the freehold by the State. But if Sir Robert Hamilton is correct that 10 or 12 years purchase would be sufficient the amount of advantage to be offered to the tenant for the repayment of capital would be very largely increased.

Immediately on taking office I was instructed to prepare a Local Government Bill and was at work at this continually until my resignation. No instructions whatever were given me as to details and as the Bill was never submitted to the Cabinet no judgment was ever pronounced on any of its intended provisions. It was, however, prepared to establish parish, district and county councils; to give to one or other of them the powers of the magistrates as to licensing and some control over existing licences, subject however to provision for compensation if they were taken away for other causes than abuse. It was also intended to give powers of purchasing land for allotments and to hand over the administration of local charities.

No discussion whatever beyond the conversation that I have already reported took place in regard to Irish policy until March 13. I do not think any of the Cabinet—except perhaps Lord Spencer—were freely consulted. John Morley told me at the Speaker's Levee on March 24 that he had only that day or the day before seen the heads of the Home Rule Bill. On March 13, however, the Cabinet were called together to consider the heads of the Land Purchase Bill.

When Mr Gladstone had explained it I contended that it was impossible to judge this scheme fairly without knowing what were to be the provisions of the Home Rule Bill which was to accompany it. Upon the constitution of the new local authority would largely depend the security; and it was evident that, if British money was to be advanced, it was important to

know whether the advance was to be made to a part of the United Kingdom under full control by Parliament, or, to what might turn out to be a practically independent nation. After considerable discussion and some hesitation on Mr Gladstone's part he stated broadly the lines of his Home Rule policy and his intention to propose a separate Parliament for Ireland with full powers to deal with all Irish affairs. I argued strongly against this proposal and also criticized severely the details of the proposed land settlement, and, as I could get no assurance of alteration in any important particular, I stated that it would be impossible for me to continue any longer a member of the Government.

On March 15 I accordingly tendered my resignation in the following correspondence, but in deference to Mr Gladstone's request I consented to hold it over until he had prepared his final scheme and submitted it to the Cabinet.

*Private*

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

March 15, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I have drawn up the enclosed letter in such a form as to show the reasons for my resignation without entering on an elaborate examination of your proposals. If there is any statement which is incorrect or otherwise objectionable to you, I shall be very glad to try to alter it to suit your wishes.

I take this opportunity of thanking you for your unvaried kindness and consideration. I sincerely regret the necessity which has arisen, but in the great task you have undertaken you can only be properly supported by those who are able honestly and conscientiously to agree with you.

I am,

My dear Mr Gladstone,

Yours very sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

March 15, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I have carefully considered the results of the discussion on

Saturday and I have come with the deepest reluctance to the conclusion that I shall not be justified in attending the meeting of the Cabinet on Tuesday, and that I must ask you to lay my resignation before Her Majesty.

You will remember that in accepting office I expressed grave doubts as to the probability of my being able to support your Irish policy.

Up to that time however no definite proposals had been formulated by you and it was only on Saturday last that you were in a position to make a communication to the Cabinet on the subject.

Without entering on unnecessary details, I may say that you proposed a scheme of Irish Land Purchase which involved an enormous and unprecedented British credit in order, in your own words, 'to afford to the Irish landlord refuge and defence from a possible mode of Government in Ireland which he regards as fatal to him'.

This scheme while contemplating only a trifling reduction of the Judicial rents fixed before the recent fall in prices would commit the British taxpayer to tremendous obligations, accompanied in my opinion with serious risk of ultimate loss.

The greater part of the land of Ireland would be handed over to a new Irish elective authority who would thus be at once the landlords and the delegates of the Irish tenants. I fear that these two capacities would be found inconsistent and that the tenants, unable or unwilling to pay the rents demanded, would speedily elect an authority pledged to give them relief and to seek to recoup itself by an early repudiation of what would be described as the English Tribute.

With these anticipations, I was naturally anxious to know what was the object for which this risk was to be incurred, and for what form of Irish Government it was intended to pave the way.

I gathered from your statements that although your plans are not finally matured, yet that you have come to the conclusion that any extension of local government on municipal lines, including even the creation of a National Council or Councils for purely Irish business, would now be entirely inadequate; and that you are convinced of the necessity for conceding a separate Legislative Assembly for Ireland with full powers to deal with all Irish affairs.

I understood that you would exclude from their competence the control of the Army and Navy and the direction of Foreign and Colonial policy but that you would allow them to arrange their own Customs Tariff, to have entire control of the Civil Forces of the country, and even if they thought fit to establish a Volunteer Army.

It appears to me that a proposal of this kind must be regarded as tantamount to a proposal for separation.

I think it is even worse, because it would set up an unstable and temporary Government which would be a source of perpetual irritation and agitation until the full demands of the Nationalist Party were conceded.

The Irish Parliament would be called upon to pay three or four millions a year as its contribution to the National Debt and the Army and Navy, and it would be required in addition to pay nearly five millions a year for interest and sinking fund on the cost of Irish land. These charges would be felt to be so heavy a burden on a poor country that persistent controversy would arise thereupon; and the due fulfilment of their obligations by the new Irish authority could only be enforced by a military intervention, which would be undertaken with every disadvantage and after all the resources of the country and the civil executive power had been surrendered to the Irish National Government.

I conclude therefore that the policy which you propose to recommend to Parliament and the country practically amounts to a proposal that Great Britain should burden itself with an enormous addition to the National Debt and probably also to an immediate increase of taxation, not in order to secure the closer and more effective union of the Three Kingdoms, but on the contrary to purchase the repeal of the Union and the practical separation of Ireland from England and Scotland.

My public utterances and my conscientious convictions are absolutely opposed to such a policy and I feel that the differences which have now been disclosed are so vital that I can no longer entertain the hope of being of service in the Government. I must therefore respectfully request you to take the necessary steps for relieving me of the office I have the honour to hold.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

11, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.  
March 15, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

I have received your letter: shall I own that as a matter of time it takes me by surprise?

I admit the breadth of the grounds of objection which you lay, but they relate to ideas in my mind. Free in the fullest sense to reject my plans, you have kindly given me your promise to examine them in common with the Cabinet. Of what I may propose on the Irish Government you know little but shreds and patches: even the paper on land is not definitive. But can you as a member of the Cabinet think of resigning in consequence of my ideas, otherwise than as of a possibility which may become a duty but which at this moment would surely be premature?

It has been absolutely beyond my power, though I have worked as hard as my age permits, to fashion a plan of Irish Government. I need not say that bricks and rafters which are prepared for a house are not themselves a house.

All I ask of you at this moment is that you will allow me the needed minimum of time to make ready my proposals for the Cabinet, I might even ask until the Cabinet has decided on them, but of this at present I say nothing.

I thank you much for the kind tone in which you write, and waiving at this time all argument I remain,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.  
March 16, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I thank you for your kind letter. I do not gather from it that I have misunderstood your views in any material point; nor does it permit me to entertain a hope that these views are likely to be altered.

In these circumstances I am still of opinion that it is not desirable that I should continue to assist in a discussion which will be directed to objects that I cannot possibly approve.

If however it is your express desire that I should postpone my resignation for a short time, I feel bound to yield my own judg-

ment to yours, and, although the situation is painful and embarrassing to me, to endeavour to meet your convenience in the matter.

Believe me,  
Yours very sincerely,  
J. CHAMBERLAIN

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.  
March 16, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

What you are willing to give me on the ground of my convenience, I readily accept on the grounds mentioned in my note of last night: and I will take care that you have *notice* before the discussion is resumed in the Cabinet. Both subjects are so tough and difficult, and my distractions are so many and heavy, that I cannot be ready for some little time to present them for practical purposes.

There are points of your statement on which I think you would find that your objections did not apply, but I cannot hopefully say this of the whole.

Yours sincerely,  
W. E. GLADSTONE

Trevelyan resigned at the same time.

No further meeting of the Cabinet was held till March 26 when Mr Gladstone stated that he was now ready to deal with the question of Home Rule and that he thought the most convenient method of bringing to an issue any difference existing on the subject would be to propose a resolution to the effect that it was desirable to establish a legislative body in Ireland with power to deal with strictly Irish affairs. I think that the resolution was coupled with some conditions as to the protection of the minority and the supremacy of Parliament. I at once pointed out that the resolution was too vague to be accepted as a foundation for any discussion and in order to define more clearly points of difference I asked Mr Gladstone four questions:

1. Whether the Irish representation was to cease at Westminster?

2. Whether the power of taxation, including customs and excise, was to be given to the Irish Parliament?

3. Whether the appointment of the judges and the magistracy was to vest in the Irish authority?

4. Whether the Irish Parliament was to have authority in every matter not specially excluded by the Act constituting it or whether it was only to have authority in matters specially delegated to it by statute?

Mr Gladstone answered all four questions including the first branch of the fourth in the affirmative and on this statement Trevelyan and myself again tendered our resignations and left the room.

On March 27 I received the following letter from Mr Gladstone:

*Private*

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

March 27, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

Your resignation has now been accepted by the Queen and I lose no time in apprising you that the fact of its having been tendered and accepted may now be freely mentioned.

In regard to this transaction, I have yielded to the inevitable, with profound regret, and a sense of public mischief which I trust we shall all of us do what in us lies to mitigate.

Your great powers could ill be dispensed with even in easy times. I shall rejoice, during what remains to me of life, to see them turned to the honour and advantage of the country.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

Previously to the introduction of the Home Rule Bill the following correspondence took place:

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

April 1, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

Am I right in assuming that after you have made your statement on Thursday next, I have the permission of Her Majesty to

explain the reasons which have prompted my resignation of the office lately held by me?

I am naturally desirous of making my statement as early as possible, in view of the extraordinary rumours which find currency at a time like the present.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

PS. Kindly address reply to Highbury, Moor Green, Birmingham.

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

April 3, 1886.

Dear Mr Chamberlain,

In answer to your letter Mr Gladstone desires me to mention that he wrote last night for H.M.'s permission to you to state the grounds of your resignation after Mr G.'s statement on Thursday. He will let you know as soon as possible what H.M. replies.

Yours truly,

H. W. PRIMROSE

Combe.

April 4, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

The Queen has at once given permission and you will be at liberty as soon as you think fit after my statement on Thursday to explain in public what were the differences of opinion on the question of Irish Government which in your judgment rendered it obligatory upon you to resign your office.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

Highbury,

Moor Green,

Birmingham.

April 6, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I am much obliged by your letter of 4th instant informing me



of the Queen's permission to explain the differences of opinion which led to my resignation.

I propose, if you have no objection, to read the following documents in connection with my statement:

1st. The statement by you of the nature of the enquiry proposed to be undertaken when you formed the Government, and my letter of the 30th January accepting your offer of a place in it.

2nd. My letter of March 15 and your reply of same date. My letter of March 16 and your reply of same date.

None of these letters are marked private but if for any reason you desire that either or both of yours should be withheld, I shall as a matter of course comply with your wishes.

I return to Prince's Gardens to-morrow Wednesday.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

April 7, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

I am very reluctant to interfere, and would on no account object to your reading any letters in which you have explained your views and course.

But I think that reading my letters in your statement would be unusual and would make it an explanation of my conduct not yours.

Your object can be gained by your saying what you conceived to be the effect of anything said or written by me—and this you are now free to do.

It would be very undesirable for either of us that I should get into debate with you on my own conduct.

I conceive that many of the most secret letters *between colleagues* carry no exterior mark of secrecy.

I make no objection to your quoting words from the statement of January 30 and if you will describe what you think the effect of the document this I hope need raise no difficulty.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

On April 5 Lord Randolph Churchill wrote to me the following characteristic note:

House of Commons.

April 5, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

My anxiety about Thursday forces me to write to you again to remind in case of forgetfulness, among many other anxieties, that the Queen's consent to a detailed explanation of Cabinet proceedings is required, which consent I am informed on high authority must be asked for in a formal letter.

Yours ever,

RANDOLPH S.C.

[PS.] That old blackguard the G.O.M. is capable of trying to trip you up on any formality.

It will appear that there was some ground for his suspicion of Mr Gladstone's intentions, as, on April 9, the day after the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, in making my explanation I was interrupted by Mr Gladstone who declared that I had no authority from the Queen to refer to any point in connection with the Land Purchase Bill.

On April 10 I wrote to Mr Gladstone intending to raise the matter as one of personal explanation in the House of Commons.

40 Prince's Gardens, S.W.

April 10, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I very much regret that there should have been any misunderstanding as to the nature of the permission accorded to me by Her Majesty for my explanation in the House of Commons yesterday. In justice to myself I think it necessary to remind you of the principal points in our correspondence on this subject.

On April 1st I wrote to you to ask if I was right in assuming that I had the permission of Her Majesty to explain after your statement the reasons which had prompted my resignation.

On the 3rd your Private Secretary Mr Primrose replied informing me that you had written to the Queen for Her Majesty's permission to me to state the grounds of my resignation.

On April 4th you wrote to me that Her Majesty had at once given permission, and that I was at liberty after your statement on April 8th to explain in public what were the differences of opinion on the question of Irish Government which in my judgment rendered it obligatory upon me to resign office.

I interpreted this as a full permission, in accordance with my request and with Mr Primrose's reply, to state the reasons which led to my resignation; and I assumed that you included in the question of Irish Government the subject of Land Purchase which you have declared to be inseparable from it.

But in order to be absolutely clear on this point, I wrote again on the 6th instant, thanking you for obtaining for me Her Majesty's permission to explain the differences of opinion that had led to my resignation.

I informed you that I proposed to read to the House in the course of my statement certain documents including my letter to you of March 15th and the subsequent correspondence, and I enquired whether you had any objection to the publication of your letters.

On April 7th you replied that you would on no account object to my reading any letters in which I had explained my views and course, but that you considered that it would be unusual and undesirable that I should read your letters and that my object could be gained by my saying what I conceived to be the tenor of anything said or written by you.

I have only to add that my letter of March 15 which I thus had your unqualified permission to read, contained, besides the tender of my resignation a general but sufficiently full account of the Land Purchase scheme proposed by you, together with a statement of my reasons for objecting to it. It was accompanied by a private note in which I explained that I had drawn up this letter in such a form as to show the reasons for my resignation without entering on an elaborate examination of your proposals; and I offered, if there was any statement in it which was incorrect or otherwise objectionable to you to try to alter it to suit your wishes.

I trust that the above plain recapitulation of the facts will satisfy you that in proposing yesterday to state the reasons which had led to my resignation, including my objection to the Land Purchase proposal as originally submitted by you I believed that

I had your complete and willing assent, and Her Majesty's permission.

As a matter of personal explanation I desire to read this letter to the House at its meeting on Monday next.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

April 11, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

I am much concerned to hear that you propose to revert to-morrow to the subject of your personal explanation.

At the same time I have no right or power to limit you otherwise than in the matter touched on Friday.

No one I think has questioned, certainly I have not, the good faith of your belief that you had my consent and the Queen's permission to enter for the purpose of personal explanation on the subject of Land Purchase not yet before Parliament.

I am most desirous to avoid anything like personal controversy between us, which I do not think would be edifying to the world.

But I cannot subscribe to all the recitals in your letter.

The best I can do, if the matter be further agitated, will be (publicly) to postpone explaining upon your explanation until the Land question is opened when I should have to make a statement which I think conclusive upon the whole matter.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

April 12, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I am also most anxious to avoid anything of a personal character in the great controversy in which I am forced to take a part.

I shall therefore refrain from any further allusions to the misunderstanding which has arisen unless others refer to it.

I hope however that you will kindly take the opportunity, if you speak again on Monday, and if not on Thursday, to say publicly, what you have been good enough to say in your letter of 11th, that you do not question the good faith of my belief that I had your assent to deal with the question of Land Purchase in the course of my explanation.

You do not say what you object to in my letter of 10th inst. The recitals are copied verbatim from the original correspondence; and for my own private information I hope you may be able, either verbally or in writing, at some convenient time, to give me your view of the matter and to point out where I have gone astray in my interpretation of your statements.

I take this opportunity to enquire whether in the debate on the introduction of the Land Purchase Bill I have Her Majesty's permission to complete my explanation of the reasons which led to my resignation.

If this permission has not been already accorded, I beg through you to make application for it.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

April 12, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

. I thank you for your note and shall have no difficulty whatever as to your request.

I will write to the Queen about explanations on Land Purchase.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

April 16, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

Not having heard from you since Monday last, I do not know whether you have received Her Majesty's permission for me to complete my explanation of the causes which led to my resignation.

It may be convenient that I should do so to-night after your statement, and I shall be much obliged if you will kindly inform me of the result of your application on my behalf.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

11, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

April 15, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

You may I think now consider yourself quite at liberty to refer to any matter in the Cabinet with reference to the Land Bill.

I intend to state the fact of the amount stated in the first sketch, and of its subsequent reduction. I think that your and Trevelyan's objection first turned my mind to the more rigid examination which showed me that, though I cannot conceive the future if the plan works well and largely, it would have been *wrong* to ask for the sum I first named. I have no objection to state this if you desire it. I should like to take the course which may on the whole be most conciliatory and least likely to aggravate any breach in the party.

I remain,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

April 16, 1886.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

Your letter, for which I thank you sincerely, has crossed my note to you.

I should be very pleased if you see your way in the course of your speech to make the statement suggested in your letter and I assure you of my earnest desire to meet you in the same conciliatory spirit.

The discussion which has taken place seems to have lessened considerably the differences which unfortunately arose in the Cabinet, and I am induced to hope from your conciliatory statement on Tuesday night that these differences may be further reduced before the Second Reading is taken.

If so it will remove from my mind the heavy burden of pain and anxiety with which I have recently regarded the future of the Liberal Party.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

*Confidential*

69, Portland Place, W.

Tuesday.<sup>1</sup>

My dear Chamberlain,

The Queen writes, 'Mr Gladstone wrote to the Queen as follows: "In his belief his late colleagues Mr Chamberlain and Mr Trevelyan, desire Y.M.'s gracious permission to state the points of difference between them and their colleagues on the Irish question which emerged in the discussions of the Cabinet and led to their resignation of office. Mr G. humbly prays that this permission may be given." To this the Queen merely answered she "granted the permission they asked for". As the Queen's name was mentioned by Mr Gladstone, she would wish Mr Chamberlain should know exactly the words used. Would Mr Goschen kindly manage this?'

As the Queen wrote very confidentially to me, I need not say that I presume she would wish this communication to you to be treated as confidential also.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE J. GOSCHEN

It will be seen from Mr Goschen's letter that Mr Gladstone incorrectly stated the facts with regard to the Queen's assent, and I am unable to reconcile his own authority distinctly given to me to read my letter to him of March 15 with his subsequent intervention in the House of Commons.

After my resignation had been publicly announced attempts were made chiefly by Labouchere, but also by Sir Hussey Vivian, and Mr Whitbread, to arrive at some compromise which might reunite the Party and prevent the defeat of the Government on

<sup>1</sup> April 13, 1886.

the Second Reading—a contingency which was from the first possible if Mr Gladstone made no concessions.

My position was very difficult and anxious. I foresaw that if I were compelled to vote against Mr Gladstone I should be singled out as the cause of his defeat and should be the mark of the most bitter animosity from that section of the Party which supported him. I also saw that in this case the Liberal Party would be broken up and its influence and usefulness destroyed for many years. My own position as a Radical would make complete union with the Conservatives very difficult. It was doubtful if the reforms which I had been endeavouring to bring to the front would commend themselves to them and I should then find myself in alliance with a party from whom I could expect no sympathy for what had hitherto been the main objects of my public life. Of course I should sacrifice all hope of ever again having any office, whereas, as Mr Gladstone's colleague, I had the best chance of succeeding him in the leadership of the Liberal Party. I had, therefore, every possible inducement to come to terms if possible. On the other hand, I was so strongly impressed with the dangerous character of the Home Rule Bill that I was determined to give up everything rather than allow this measure to be proceeded with in its original form.

From the first I fixed my attention on three points. First, the exclusion of the Irish members from Westminster. If this were carried out it would be impossible to insist on the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament in which Ireland would have no representation. Second, the inclusion of Ulster in the scheme; and third, the anti-radical proposals in the Bill for two Orders, etc., which were intended as guarantees for the minority but which I thought bad in principle and useless in practice.

Early in the discussion Mr Gladstone used language which was interpreted to mean that the question of Ulster was left open with every desire on the part of the Government to give separate treatment, at all events, to the Protestant part of the Province, and accordingly I directed my chief efforts afterwards to the presence of the Irish members at Westminster and the modification of the Bill which this change would necessitate.



The disposition of Mr Gladstone and his friends was sometimes conciliatory, sometimes the reverse, and it varied in the ratio of their hopes and fears for the success of the Bill on the Second Reading. It seems likely that they were misled by their Whips as to the state of things in the House of Commons and by Schnadhorst as to the position in the country. Every time that they obtained a favourable report of possibilities they retreated from their offers and raised their terms, and at the very last moment an arrangement which had been promised was repudiated and the fate of the Bill thereby sealed.

I do not believe that there was any sincere desire for reconciliation on the part of several important members of the Cabinet. John Morley seems to have always been against concession, while Harcourt varied from day to day. Childers was a friend of peace, while all the others were nonentities and ready to do whatever Mr Gladstone decided.

On March 31 I received a letter from Labouchere which explained his view of the situation. He wrote that the Radicals wanted to come to an arrangement with me. Their principal object was to get rid of the Irish. They did not care about Home Rule for itself. Gladstone was playing a game with the Land Bill. He was tied to Spencer to bring it in but would throw it over if he found the opposition too serious. If I would come in and return to the fold the Whigs would be cleared out. If Gladstone were beaten at the general election we could together upset Hartington and the Tories with a policy of large promises including cows to agriculturalists and free breakfast-tables to the artisans. Then we should hold the field against Whigs, Tories and Lords, and establish firmly the rule of the Radical Party. 'For my part,' he said, 'I would coerce the Irish, grant them Home Rule, or do anything with them, in order to make the Radical programme possible. Ireland is but a pawn in the game.'

On April 7 he wrote again that the 'old Parliamentary Hand'<sup>1</sup> intended to say in debate that his object was only to establish

<sup>1</sup> A phrase used by Gladstone in the House of Commons, January 21, 1886.  
P

the principle leaving all details open for discussion in Committee. He (Labouchere) had been asked to sound Parnell as to retaining Belfast and the surrounding country under British rule. Parnell was against it and this policy had been abandoned.

On the same day I had a letter from John Morley with a message from Mr Gladstone to say that on the four points or proposals on which I parted company from the Government there was one on which they had been able to move in my direction and no more than one:

Practically and substantially, therefore, the main objections which you took are still good against our scheme—as good now as they were then.

On April 8 I replied to Labouchere that I had heard on the highest authority that the scheme to be proposed would not meet the main objections which led to my resignation and that I was sorry as I was in a most conciliatory mood.

On the 8th the Bill was introduced and on the 9th I spoke in opposition.

On the 15th Labouchere wrote again pressing me not to be obstinate on the details. If I would come over, 'Mr G. must soon come to an end.'<sup>1</sup>

On the 16th I spoke again on the introduction of the Land Bill. I intended to be conciliatory and my speech was accepted in this sense by most of the Liberals.

On the 17th I wrote Labouchere the following letter:

My dear Labouchere,

I really made a great effort last night to come to an arrangement and whether it is successful or not depends now on Mr Gladstone's inclination to meet me half-way; and perhaps I should say it depends upon the action of yourself and other Radical members who agree with my views and are in a position to bring sufficient

<sup>1</sup> Labouchere's letter of April 15, 1886, in fact reads: 'Your coming over would ensure the passing of the Irish Government Bill—it would go to the Lords—then Queen, Lords and Whigs would be on one side, and the Radicals on the other. Mr G. must soon come to an end. You would be our leader.'

pressure to bear upon the Whips to make reconciliation a certainty.

I am quite convinced from the information which reaches me, that unless some such reconciliation is effected the Liberal Party will be hopelessly defeated at the general election. The majority will very likely go with the Party machinery and with Mr Gladstone, but a sufficient minority will stand aloof to make success impossible.

We cannot leave the matter uncertain till after the Second Reading. I know enough of parliamentary tactics to be sure that in that case we shall get nothing, but be beaten in detail on every division. All I ask is that Mr Gladstone should give some sufficient assurance that he will consent—first, to the retention of the Irish representation at Westminster on its present footing or according to population, and at the same time the maintenance of Imperial control over Imperial taxation in Ireland; and secondly, that he should be willing to abandon all the so-called safeguards in connection with the Constitution of the new legislative body in Dublin.

You can get this assurance if you like and the matter is now, therefore, in your hands.

Yours truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Labouchere replied the same date as follows:

10, Queen Anne's Gate,  
St. James's Park.

April 17, [1886].

My dear Chamberlain,

I made it quite clear and distinct both to Herbert Gladstone and to Arnold Morley what you wanted, after seeing you. Herbert is to tackle his father on the subject. I have no doubt that we can arrange the matter. A. Morley would hold that, anyhow, you would vote for the Bill. I said that this was not quite so certain, and that your proposal was a reasonable one. H.G. said that his father did not in the least undervalue your support, and considered that your present attitude was paralysing the party outside Parliament. Some friends of yours were getting up a memorandum to Mr G. about the Bill, asking him to

promise this and that. Do pray stop them. If once we get to memorandums—we shall have counter ones from the Whigs, and they put Mr G. in a hole.

H. G. says that the real *bona fide* difficulty of your [*sic*] father, is that he cannot devise a scheme. Could you not let me have one? This would settle this nonsense. How would it be, if proxies were allowed in respect to the Irish?

Yours truly,

H. LABOUCHERE

PS. What day is your meeting at Birmingham?

I wrote again to him the same day to say that nothing would induce me to vote for the Second Reading unless I got some assurances of Mr Gladstone's willingness to maintain the Irish representation.

On April 19 Harcourt wrote me a friendly letter in which he said that I must not dictate, or seem to dictate; that the Party would go with Mr Gladstone and urged me to accept the Second Reading and to try for the changes I required in Committee.

On the same day Labouchere wrote:

Mr G. . . . has no great objection himself to the Irish members sitting here. But he does not like to consult his Cabinet, for fear of further resignations, and does not like to give a pledge without consulting them.

According to the Whips there was a majority of fifteen to twenty for the Bill. He again pressed me to vote for the Second Reading and to leave all questions to Committee.

On the same day Labouchere said that he had sent my letters to Mr Gladstone.

On the 20th he enclosed a resolution to be moved at some meeting he was attending and asked me for a letter saying something in favour of the principle of the Bill but insisting on the retention of members and the abrogation of the two orders.

I wrote to him accordingly on the 21st, on which day there was a meeting of the Two Thousand<sup>1</sup> in Birmingham which I

<sup>1</sup> The 'great committee' of the Birmingham Liberal Association. It had formerly been known as the 'Six Hundred'.

addressed. A strong effort had been made by Schnadhorst, Osler, and some others to prevent the meeting from coming to any conclusion. I was told that they feared the effect of my speech and wished to postpone a decision to another meeting when I would not be present. After hearing me, however, the meeting decided by an enormous majority to go to a vote and the resolution was carried almost unanimously—much to Schnadhorst's chagrin.

On the 22nd I again told Labouchere that I would not vote for the Second Reading without positive assurances.

On the 24th Labouchere repeated his request that I should be satisfied with the assurance that the retention of the Irish members should be an open question.

On the 25th Harcourt wrote to me that the country was going with Mr Gladstone.

The leading men of the secession like Hartington, James and yourself will of course survive but the second rate outsiders like Rylands, Wiggin, etc., will go to the wall at a General Election. The Tories will gain and the Liberals will lose considerably but not enough to enable either to command the House of Commons and your friends the Parnellites with whom you will not part will more than control English politics.

On May 1 Labouchere writes:

I had a letter from Morley [John]<sup>1</sup> yesterday . . . He said, 'I don't think there is a pin of difference between you and me as to the desirableness of passing the Second Reading at almost any cost. But Chamberlain wants us to go down on our knees, and this cannot be done, for the money.'

Morley suggested\* that the Irish members might come back in three years and Labouchere again pressed me to leave the settlement of the question to Committee.

<sup>1</sup>Chamberlain's parenthesis.

On May 1 Labouchere again writes that he has sent Mr Gladstone my figures as to the probable Division and received a telegram from him announcing a letter to Midlothian. This Manifesto was published the same day in the papers but did not contain any pledge with regard to the Irish members.

May 3. Labouchere writes:

Mr. G. has your ultimatumest of ultimatums. My impression is that he will assent . . . The decision will depend very much upon the figures.

On the same date Labouchere reported an interview with Arnold Morley. He had told Morley that the Radicals were in favour of the Irish remaining. Morley admitted this, and promised to explain to Mr Gladstone. In fact he had represented this to him ten days ago. Labouchere urged him to write to Mr Gladstone urging a speedy settlement, 'for Mr G. is apt to wait for something to turn up to his advantage'.

On the 6th Labouchere writes: 'Morley<sup>1</sup> would have agreed to leave out the clause.<sup>2</sup> [This was my latest proposal, leaving any substitute to be found before the Committee stage.] Mr G. would not. He has elaborated some alternative scheme.'

Labouchere urged me to take this as a substantial concession: if I did not possibly some of my followers would desert me.

May 7. A correspondence between T. H. Bolton, M.P., and myself was published in the newspapers. In this I said that I would vote for the Second Reading if the 24th Clause were dropped in the hope that the other necessary modifications would be made in Committee. I referred to Ulster as an open question and pointed out that the Bill as it stood was based on the lines of Colonial independence, whereas, to have been safe, it should have been based rather on the principle of federation. I had in mind what I subsequently explained in the House of Commons

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Morley.

<sup>2</sup> Clause 24 of the Home Rule Bill, abolishing Irish representation in the Westminster Parliament.

—the provisions of the internal constitution of Canada—the relations between the provinces of which I thought might serve as a suggestion of the future relations between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

May 7.<sup>1</sup> Labouchere writes:

The Cabinet yesterday was not a formal one, there is to be one to-morrow. Some, I understand are in favour of cutting out the clause respecting the exclusion of the Irish, and leaving the matter to future legislation—others suggest alternative schemes. Of this I am certain, it may be that terms will not be agreed to before the discussion on the Second Reading, but—provided that the Bill cannot be carried without you and your friends, the point will be yielded.

On the 8th he writes that he has been to Downing Street where he met Wolverton who agreed that if I wanted the Irish representation continued on the basis of population I ought to have it although there must be some modifications in the Bill if the Irish remain.

At this meeting Labouchere appears to have discussed the exact terms in which Mr Gladstone would announce the compromise. On the same day I received a telegram from him that 'all went right at meeting' <sup>2</sup> and on the 9th a letter in which he says 'the "cave-in" is complete. . . . You went for "full representation", and as I understand it you get it'.

On the same day (the 9th) Labouchere says he had seen Morley (Arnold) who said that I 'will be satisfied'.

On the 10th he writes that he had again seen Morley (Arnold) and had told him that:

<sup>1</sup> The letter quoted here under the date May 7 is in fact headed simply 'Wednesday'. May 7, 1886, was a Friday. Probably the correct date, therefore, was May 5.

<sup>2</sup> This telegram from Labouchere reports a statement by James Stansfeld (who had succeeded Chamberlain as President of the Local Government Board in Gladstone's administration) that 'all went right at meeting' of the Cabinet at which Chamberlain's stipulation concerning the retention of the Irish members at Westminster had been discussed.

Chamberlain is quite fair on his side, he has a natural distrust of the old Parliamentary hand, and will not be humbugged. He no doubt will not quarrel over mere words but he must have the substance.

On the 10th Mr Gladstone made the expected speech in the House of Commons. Instead of proffering the suggested compromise he explained in lengthy and not very intelligible terms a plan for allowing the Irish members to come back occasionally for special purposes.

On the 10th (after Mr Gladstone had spoken) Labouchere wrote as follows:

*Private*

House of Commons.

Monday.

My dear Chamberlain,

I gave Arnold Morley three questions to take to Mr G.

1. Would he propose the retention of Irish Members for all questions of taxation?

2. Would they come here like English Members?

3. Would taxation include everything which was involved in Imperial taxation affecting them?

He answered Yes to all—but said that in regard to taxation he had suddenly thought that the tea tax is renewed every year, and that he had not put this before the Cabinet, but he personally had no sort of objection to their voting on it, and did not suppose that the Cabinet had.

I suggested that Herschell should see you. He writes to say that he will be engaged all Tuesday and suggests Wednesday.

I have told them—which they all know that the speech has produced the most deplorable effect, and that you are quite right in being indignant—and that unless they definitely make up their minds to explain everything satisfactorily the Bill is lost. This they admit.

I am urging on them to agree to introduce themselves a clause about 'other Imperial matters', and I tell them that unless they are frank and yield on such points it is utterly vain to hope to win over you or anyone else.



The funny thing is that Mr G. has walked off under the conviction that his speech was most satisfactory.

Yours,

H. LABOUCHERE

I replied May 11:

*Private*

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

May 11, 1886.

My dear Labouchere,

In the remarkable speech of the Prime Minister last night nothing impressed me more than the passages in which he spoke of the advantage of public declarations in the House of Commons as contrasted with the inconvenience of underground negotiations carried on elsewhere.

Under all the circumstances you will I am sure approve my decision not to enter on any further private discussion of the proposals of the Government.

If they have any fresh modifications to suggest I hope they will state them in the House where I am sure they will receive the most favourable consideration from all who, like myself, deeply regret the differences of opinion which have arisen in the Liberal Party.

I am engaged all Wednesday, but this is of no consequence as in the present condition of matters no good could come of any private interview.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Labouchere forwarded me the following letter from Herbert Gladstone:

*Private*

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

May 11, 1886.

Dear Mr Labouchere,

Thanks for your letter. I think there is a decided break in the clouds. I have done my level best this morning to put the P.M. in exact possession of the position resulting from yesterday's debate, and of Chamberlain's views. I see perfectly that his

(Chamberlain's) position is a very difficult one but I hope he will not assume from the speech yesterday that there is *not* every wish consistently with maintaining the principle of the Bill, to meet his views fairly. I wasn't satisfied myself with yesterday's 'concession', but I am certain of this—that its deficiency was due not to a want of goodwill to meet fair objections, but because Father had not sufficiently mastered the difficulties which presented themselves to his mind, and which no doubt mainly resulted from Saturday's Cabinet.

I think now he has arrived at what may distinctly be a basis of conciliation, if his colleagues agree, founded on the three points. The matter has been more fully thought out and I am in good hopes that when Herschel [*sic*] sees Chamberlain to-morrow he may be able to give substantive proposals. All this is of course my belief as it is my strong desire. And I sincerely hope that the situation of Sunday and Monday morning may be considered to hold good till to-morrow at any rate.

The objects which I have been striving to influence my Father to work for more thoroughly of vital importance to the Bill are:

- (1) Full representation on taxation.
- (2) Power to Irish Parliament to have direct share in Imperial and excluded subjects.
- (3) Effective supremacy of Crown and Parliament over Irish Parliament.

Yours very truly,

HERBERT J. GLADSTONE

On the same day I received a telegram from Labouchere:

I think they are quite conscious of their mistake and ready to capitulate along the line would it not be possible to see the emissary to-morrow or Thursday.

The emissary referred to was Lord Herschell who proposed to call upon me; but while expressing my readiness to see him as a friend I plainly told him that I doubted the advantage of any further confidential communications. In this Herschell acquiesced and no further communication took place.

The attempt at a compromise having thus come to an end under circumstances which almost amounted to a breach of faith, it became necessary to take more decided steps. Accordingly I invited a meeting of all the Radical members of Parliament who were supposed to be in doubt as to their vote and this accordingly took place at Prince's Gardens on May 12. Between fifty and sixty were present and to these I explained the negotiations which had passed in the endeavour to establish a *modus vivendi* in respect to the Home Rule Bill. I stated that when these negotiations were brought to a close I fully understood that the Government were prepared to leave the Irish representation at Westminster undisturbed. Before this point had been reached I had given way on minor points in the hope of a reconciliation being arranged, but I had declared the representation of Irish members to be vital. Mr Gladstone's attitude on the Second Reading had been a complete surprise: the modifications suggested by him were wholly illusory and founded on misapprehension of the real grounds of the opposition. The representation of the Irish members was not a technical point but the symbol and flag of the controversy which was directed to maintaining the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament and the effective union of the Three Kingdoms.

Trevelyan followed in a speech of a very decided character in which he stated that under the circumstances it would be impossible for him to support the Bill.

• The meeting was enthusiastic and unanimous.

Between this date (May 12) and the Second Reading further proposals were made. Whitbread suggested the withdrawal of the Bill and the substitution of a Resolution affirming the principle of some legislative authority to deal with exclusively Irish affairs. I offered to accept this in the terms of Mr Gladstone's own memorandum handed to me when I agreed to take office with him.

At one time it appeared likely that this compromise would be accepted. It was, however, rejected by Mr Gladstone mainly on the ground that Lord Hartington had shown by a speech at Bradford that he would not accept such an arrangement.

I pointed out to Whitbread that the communications had taken place entirely without reference to Lord Hartington and the group which followed him. If I had known that their assent was a *sine qua non* I should of course have desired that the communication should have been made from the first to Lord Hartington. I had assumed, however, that the agreement of the Radical Union group would be sufficient to give Mr Gladstone a majority and would therefore have justified such an arrangement.

Another attempt was made to go back to the proposal in my letter to Mr Bolton and for Mr Gladstone to agree to drop the 24th Clause leaving the representation unaltered for the present. In this case the Bill might be withdrawn after the Second Reading and a new Bill brought in in the autumn.

On May 17 Labouchere states what he believed occurred in the Cabinet to prevent the arrangement. He goes on:

They all perceived what fools they had been, except those who were anxious that no agreement should be come to with you (notably Harcourt who is playing for the succession) and it was hoped that Herschel [*sic*] would be able to smooth down matters.

He goes on to argue at length that I should do well to accept a proposal to vote for the Second Reading as a declaration of principle on the understanding that the Bill was then to be withdrawn.

On May 25 I received the following letter from Trevelyan who throughout this business professed to be shy of all negotiation and very decided in his opposition to the Bill:<sup>1</sup>

*Private*

House of Commons Library.

May 25, 1886.

Dear Chamberlain,

I am very uneasy about this conjuncture. Several reasons strike me why you should hesitate in accepting.

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan had resigned from Gladstone's Government at the same time as Chamberlain, and voted against the Home Rule Bill. He lost his seat at the subsequent General Election, and returned to the Liberal Party in 1887.

1. I very much doubt whether Mr G. can make the pledge good. The Tories, the supporters of Hartington, and the Irish might combine to exclude the Irish members.

2. The Land Bill is almost certain to pass if the Home Rule Bill passes. I cannot but think that you are bound, not only to oppose the Land Bill, but to defeat it.

3. We have got the men together to defeat the scheme, and have got them into good heart. If we go to pieces now, we shall never unite again. I think, to speak quite plainly, that the men who still oppose the bill will be inclined to think themselves thrown overboard; and I say this the more freely as I do not think so, and should never say so.

4. I very much doubt whether the victory will be supposed to rest with you. I was sorely inclined to think, a fortnight ago, that, while you would have appeared to succeed, Gladstone would be really the only one who profited: and for that reason I was glad when the thing fell through. I fancy that, if he makes this concession, and you accept it, you will find, when it comes to moulding the bill, that his followers will consider that the point of danger for them is past.

This letter does not need a written answer, or I would have scrupled to write it: but for goodness sake think very carefully over this, the most important action you may ever have to take.

Ever yours truly,

G. O. TREVELYAN

May 25. Labouchere writes that Mr Gladstone will not give up the 24th Clause: Morley would sooner die. Childers has been doing his best to induce them.

On 'Derby Day'<sup>1</sup> he writes again:

There are men in the Cabinet who—whilst pretending to be in favour of conciliation, are doing all they can to prevent it—some *ab irato*, and some because their private ambitions point to your being forced into a position of antagonism.

On the 27th a meeting of the Liberal Party was held at the Foreign Office. Most of the followers of Lord Hartington and

<sup>1</sup> May 26, 1886.

myself stayed away. Mr Gladstone made a long speech in which he declined to treat the voting on the Second Reading of the Bill as a Resolution, but promised that if the Second Reading were carried it should be withdrawn and a new Bill introduced in October. In this new Bill the 24th Clause would be remodelled. The speech did not make it clear that Mr Gladstone intended to maintain an effective and complete representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament, and his statements rather pointed to the proposal for an intermittent and limited representation which I had already rejected. Those members, however, of my group who were afraid for their seats and anxious to find an excuse to vote for the Bill professed to find in Mr Gladstone's speech satisfactory assurances and Caine reported that thirty were shaky or had already gone over. Subsequent events proved that this was an exaggeration.

On the 29th a discussion arose across the table as to the exact meaning of Mr Gladstone's speech. Taxed by Hicks Beach with having said that he would remodel the Bill, Mr Gladstone said, 'Never, never, never', and went on to point out emphatically that he only contemplated some modification of the 24th Clause. The unsatisfactory nature of his explanation confirmed some of the waverers in their opposition to the Bill.

Labouchere wrote me as follows:

*Private*

10, Queen Anne's Gate,  
St. James's Park.  
May 29, [1886].

My dear Chamberlain,

I think that I have arranged for a written antidote which will appear on Monday to the 'responsible frivolity' of our loquacious and indiscreet friend. I am not yet quite sure whether it is arranged, so please don't say anything to *anyone* about it, or if it appears say that I had anything to do with it. *He* insists that he said in the House exactly what he said at the meeting. Reading his speech, it is difficult to pin him to any particular passage—the only thing that can be said is that he used phrases which might cover a wider principle than a 'domestic legislature for Irish affairs'. I was asked to put on paper my objections to the speech.

I took these points: 1. That he made a vote cover a general recognition of the Bill. 2. That he studiously limited all 'reconstruction' to a particular point. 3. That he implied, and almost stated that *the* Bill was to be introduced, and made no clear offer to consider the whole subject of the details which were to give effect to the principle of his domestic legislature principle [*sic*], and did not say that he would consider any suggestion offered to him by leading persons in the Liberal Party.

These are, in point of fact, your criticisms not mine.

*He* was astounded at anyone not finding all this in his speech but I said that surprising as this might be, no one friend or foe had found anything of the kind.

Is it not terrible to have to deal with a lunatic at large, whose intelligence seems to be now limited to a sort of low cunning, and who cannot refrain from perpetually bringing an ace down from his sleeve, even when he has only to play fair to win the trick?

It seems to me that the real object of all should be to tide over the present conjuncture, and to leave everything 'without prejudice' for this autumn Session.

The public do not know the object of their adoration as we do. He is still their fetish, and they regard any doubt of his divine character as sacrilege.

I should have thought that Henry James's idea of not voting would have suited both you and Hartington. It certainly is the most logical outcome of the position. He says that the Bill is a mere declaration of a principle. You say that it may be more. He offers to withdraw the Bill, after the principle has been ratified by a vote. You cannot quite believe him in anything beyond that the Bill will be withdrawn. This being so, if all of you were to agree to leave him and his principle to find their level in the House of Commons—to say that you are for a domestic legislature and therefore cannot vote for<sup>1</sup> the Bill, but that you are not for more and therefore that you cannot vote for a Bill which *may* involve more—I think that this would put you quite right with the Radicals, and leave you a free hand, although it may be doubtful whether the Whigs who go against principle and details would be quite so wise to accept this solution.

If, however, the Whigs do vote, and if you and your people

<sup>1</sup> 'Should be "against".' (Note by Chamberlain.)

abstain, it is not quite certain that we should carry the Bill, in which case the outcry would be against the abstainers, and they would be cursed for precipitating a dissolution against the idol.

According to the Whips Saunders has again got salvation. Half of these people are like women, who are pleased to keep up the 'I will and I won't' as long as possible, in order to be courted. Generally this ends in 'I will'.

Akers-Douglas told the Whips last night that the debate was not to end before Thursday. They could not quite make out whether this was official or not.

Yours truly,

H. LABOUCHERE

May 29. Harcourt wrote a long and conciliatory letter urging that I had sufficiently gained my object and pointing out the consequences to myself of opposition to Mr Gladstone and a breach with the Party.

May 31. I called a meeting of my group in a Committee Room of the House of Commons. Most of those who had been present at the previous meeting came and after explaining the situation I put it to the meeting that we had two alternatives—one to walk out, in which case the Second Reading might probably be carried by a very small majority—the other to vote against. I did not state what my own course would be but I read the letter which Mr Bright had written to me for the meeting.

One Ash,

Rochdale.

May 31, 1886.

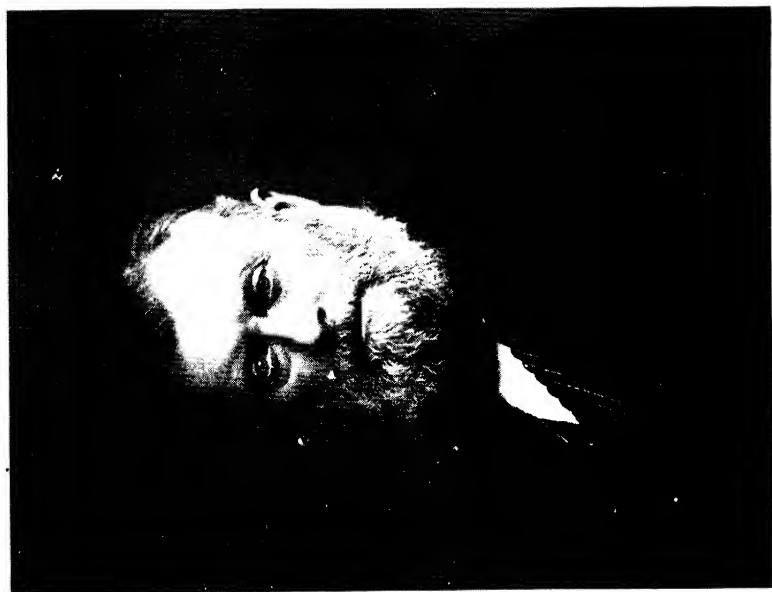
My dear Chamberlain,

My present intention is to vote against the second reading. Not having spoken in the debate, I am not willing to leave my view of the Bill or Bills in any doubt. '

But, I am not willing to take the responsibility of advising others as to their course. If they can content themselves with abstaining from the division, I shall be glad—they will render a greater service by preventing the threatened dissolution than by compelling it, if Mr Gladstone is unwise enough to venture upon it.

You will see from this exactly where I am. A small majority





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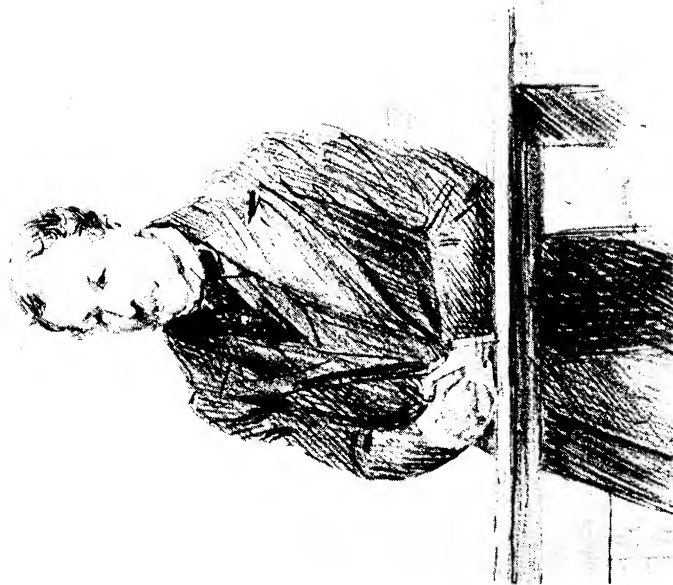
1818-86



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EARL SPENCER

1835-1910



*Sydney Prior Hall*

*National Gallery of Ireland*

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY O'SHEA

1840-1905



*Elliott and Fry*

HENRY LABOUCHERE

1831-1912

for the Bill may be *almost* as good as its defeat, and may save the country from the heavy sacrifice of a General Election. I wish I could join you, but I cannot now change the path I have taken from the beginning of this unhappy discussion.

Believe me always,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN BRIGHT

[PS.] If you think it of any use, you may read this note to your friends.

Trevelyan made a vigorous speech in which he said that if we did not oppose the Bill we should stand before the world as the most dishonest and cowardly party in the House of Commons by voting for a Bill of which we disapproved.

On a show of hands only thirteen voted for abstention while thirty-five<sup>1</sup> voted in favour of opposition to the Second Reading. Only three members were in favour of supporting the Second Reading. Afterwards a vote was taken on the main question when forty-five<sup>2</sup> hands were held up in favour of positively voting against the Second Reading.

On June 5 Labouchere wrote a letter for publication which contained an appeal to vote for the Second Reading as a mere abstract declaration of principle or at least to abstain from voting against. To this I replied as follows:

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

June 5, 1886.

My dear Labouchere,

I thank you for your letter of this morning and sincerely appreciate the spirit in which it is written, but especially your recognition that my attitude has been conciliatory throughout these unfortunate differences, and that I have been at all times most anxious to prevent the disruption of the Liberal Party.

You do not give me the names of the friends on whose behalf you write, and who now urge me to vote in favour of the Second Reading of a Bill with many of my objections to which they themselves agree. I do not know, therefore, whether or no

<sup>1</sup> In fact, thirty-nine.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, forty-eight.

they have already pledged themselves to take the course which they urge upon me, but I assume that this is the case as I have not myself received any communication in the same sense from any of those who have declared their inability to support the Second Reading.

I am unable to accept your reference to my speech as quite accurate, but I adhere on every point to the words of the original report. I quite admit that Mr Gladstone has given ample assurance that he will not hold any member who may vote for the Second Reading as committed thereby to a similar vote for the Second Reading of the Bill when reintroduced in October, but the question still remains whether such members will not be obliged to take this course in order to preserve their own logical consistency.

Up to the present time, Mr Gladstone has given no indication whatever that the Bill to be presented in October will be materially different from the Bill now before the House. On the contrary he has distinctly stated that he will not depart from the main outlines of the present measure. It is, however, to the main outlines of the present Bill that the opposition of my friends and myself has been directed, and it appears to me that we should be stultifying ourselves if we were to abstain at the last moment from giving effect to our conscientious convictions. We are ready to accept as a principle the expediency of establishing some kind of legislative authority in Ireland subject to the conditions which Mr Gladstone himself has laid down, but we honestly believe that none of these conditions are satisfactorily secured by the plan which has been placed before us. I share your apprehension as to the General Election at the present time, but the responsibility for this must, I think, in common fairness, rest with those who will have brought in and forced to a division a Bill which, in the words of Mr Bright, 'not twenty members, outside the Irish Party, would support if Mr Gladstone's great authority were withdrawn from it'.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

[P.S.] As I understand that many Radical members are cognizant of your letter, I propose to send it, together with my reply, for publication in *The Times*.

A division took place on June 7, when the Bill was defeated by a majority of thirty, which included ninety-three Liberals.

It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if either Mr Gladstone had adhered to the compromise which seemed at one time to have been accepted, or if, on the other hand, I had been induced to vote for the Second Reading without receiving any definite pledges.

In the first case the Bill would have been withdrawn and remodelled. If, as I understood at the time, Mr Gladstone was prepared to treat Ulster separately, and if the Irish members were retained at Westminster, the new plan must infallibly have approximated to the plan of National Councils with limited powers which was accepted by Mr Parnell in 1885.<sup>1</sup> It could not have gone beyond the plan proposed by me and subsequently printed in *A Unionist Policy for Ireland*.<sup>2</sup> Such legislative authorities, strictly subordinate to the Imperial Parliament, would not have been open to the objections taken to Mr Gladstone's scheme. They might, however, have constantly striven to extend their scope and powers, but this is true of every Irish representative authority and it is equally an argument against every form of popular government in that country. Possibly, if Mr Gladstone had gone on this line, he would have found the difficulty insuperable, as it is doubtful whether Parnell and the Irish would have accepted any compromise.

• On the other hand, if I had voted for the Second Reading without conditions, I am convinced that the wirepullers would have used the interval to manipulate the constituencies through the local caucuses, and would have tried and probably succeeded in obtaining a blank cheque for Mr Gladstone. He would have been master of the situation in October and would have been able to introduce and carry through the House of Commons a Bill practically the same as the one introduced in April. His object throughout the negotiations was to get his Second Reading without paying the price which I demanded. He was willing to

<sup>1</sup> See p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Published anonymously by Chamberlain in 1888.

let me think I had got it but he was anxious to avoid any definite pledge and would only have given this if he had been absolutely certain that he would otherwise be defeated in the House and at the Polls. I believe that he was assured to the contrary by Schnadhorst, and I have been told since that, much to Arnold Morley's disgust, he sent for Schnadhorst to Downing Street the day before he spoke and altered his speech at the last moment in consequence of the favourable report he received from him of the prospects of a General Election.

On June 10 Mr Gladstone announced that the Government had recommended the Queen to dissolve Parliament.

On the 11th I issued in the shape of an address to my constituents a manifesto on the situation. I had previously proposed to John Bright and Lord Hartington that we should issue a joint address, but both preferred separate action chiefly because they did not agree with me in my willingness to accept an extended scheme of local government for Ireland provided that the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament were maintained. Both thought it better to oppose Mr Gladstone's scheme and not to suggest any alternative.

June 17. The National Radical Union was constituted in Birmingham, with the stated object of maintaining the Union, and promoting a uniform system of local self-government for all parts of the United Kingdom under the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament. Amongst those present and earnest in support were Winterbotham and W. S. Caine.<sup>1</sup>

June 19. I addressed my constituents in the Town Hall. Some opposition was threatened but it came to nothing and I was returned unopposed.

In the course of the next few days I addressed meetings at Barrow in favour of Caine, in the Birmingham Town Hall on behalf of Mr Collings, at Llanelly on behalf of Sir John Jenkins, at Cardiff in support of Mr Brand, and at Rossendale in support of Lord Hartington.

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Winterbotham and W. S. Caine both retained their seats in Parliament in 1886 standing as Liberal-Unionists. Both later returned to the Liberal Party.

The final result of the General Election was that the Unionists were returned with a majority of about 118 of whom seventy-four were Liberal Unionists.

In July Lord Salisbury offered the Premiership to Lord Hartington. In speaking with the latter on the subject I told him that I was not prepared in any case to take office with the Conservatives and that I believed that he as well as myself could be of more service in an independent capacity. Hartington subsequently declined Lord Salisbury's offer. In a letter to me dated July 25 he said that he had told Lord Salisbury, who wished to advise the Queen to send for him to form a Government, that he thought it was impossible, and after consulting with Sir Henry James and others had written to him finally declining. Lord Hartington added that in his opinion the most useful part which he could take would be to give Lord Salisbury an independent and friendly support and that he believed that I should do the same.

August 1. I wrote to Lord Hartington the following letter:

My dear Hartington,

I entirely approve of the postponement till February of any attempt to deal seriously with Ireland. Just after the elections it will be impossible for Mr G. to make effective resistance. If he tries to do so, it will throw him still more into the arms of the Parnellites and disgust the country. I should vote without hesitation against his amendment if he proposed one.

But I am very strongly in favour of the immediate announcement of a small Royal Commission to enquire into the Land question. This is the foundation of Irish discontent, and all authorities are agreed it should be settled first. If it were settled, I doubt if Home Rule would any longer be a burning question.

My idea is that the Commission should be non-political and consist of really practical men including at least a couple of good land agents. I should offer a seat to Healey [sic].

The reference should be to enquire into the working of the Land Acts and especially

(1) as to the effect of the recent fall in produce on the ability of the tenants to pay Judicial rents.

(2) on the practicability and advantage of adopting a sliding scale for rent.

(3) on the advisability of extending the Acts to leaseholders.

(4) on the condition of the small tenants under 20 or 30 acres and on the best means of securing permanent improvement in their circumstances.

A very important consideration arises as to whether this Commission—or another—should enquire into the question of public works, main drainage, communications, fisheries, and the revival of any industry suitable to the circumstances of the country.

I have a firm belief that money expended wisely and prudently, and in connection with some large, complete and well-considered plan of improvement, would be a good investment. I should be inclined to instruct a paid Commission consisting of say an engineer of the first eminence and an agriculturist with a man of business—a contractor or something of that sort—to make the necessary examination and report.

As regards Local Government in all its forms, I think that the Cabinet should consider the question carefully and decide how far they will go. Then let them introduce their scheme in February in the shape of resolutions and refer these to a very strong Committee—perhaps a Joint Committee—of both Houses to consider and report.

I spoke to R. Churchill about these matters in general terms, but I could not get him to give much attention to them. Unless they do something of the kind, the Country will lose faith in them, the Irish will be goaded into outrages, and the Government will fall to pieces in the first session.

The question of outrages in the autumn is undoubtedly a serious one. I expect that rent will be withheld and if evictions follow on a large scale I suppose they will provoke outrages. The desirable thing to do is to distinguish between cases where rent is really excessive under present circumstances, and those in which the tenant is well able to pay. Is this possible? Can any temporary jurisdiction be given to the Land Courts in such a matter? Might they not have power to declare on appeal whether the arrears were fairly due to the landlord, or whether his right to evict



should be suspended for a time and at least during the enquiry now to be made.

Or could some power of relief be given to the County Courts—similar to that enjoyed now by the English Courts in the matter of the relief of small debtors. A County Court Judge, under my Bankruptcy Act, has power to consolidate debts under £50 and to make order for payment of a composition or for delay or for wiping out the debt.

This is a matter for practical men in Ireland, but if something is not done we shall have a bad autumn and winter.

As regards the meeting on the 5th<sup>1</sup> I hope you will not ask the Peers. The difficulty of our position is entirely in the Commons, and if our friends find themselves overshadowed and outvoted by the Peers, they will never attend our meetings again.

I shall come up next Wednesday and could be with you by 3 p.m. if you want to see me.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

On August 5 the new Parliament met.

At this time Mr Gladstone was reported to be in a conciliatory frame of mind. Arnold Morley in answer to enquiries expressed his hope that the Liberal Unionist leaders would continue to sit with their old colleagues on the front opposition bench. It seemed within the bounds of possibility that the Gladstonian Party might recognize their defeat as final and after a short interval might be willing to co-operate with the Liberal Unionists on the basis of the programme of the Party before Home Rule was adopted. Such a course was, however, improbable as long as Mr Gladstone continued to lead the Party, but having regard to the statements he had made at different times before the election it was possible that he might carry out his long expressed desire for retirement. •

Very little was known as to the policy which Lord Salisbury would be willing to adopt. I feared that this might be either reactionary or at least a policy of simple resistance to Home Rule. In the first case I let it be known that I should be unable to sup-

<sup>1</sup> 'Of Liberal Unionist members.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)

port the Government. In the second case I thought it probable that we should be unable to hold our Party together and that the Gladstonians would speedily return to office. The situation was difficult and complicated and I was anxiously on the look out for signs of a desire for reunion on reasonable terms which might be shown by the Gladstonians.

On August 26, I spoke on Mr Parnell's amendment to the Address. In the course of my speech I said that I would do nothing to turn out the Government as long as those who would succeed were committed to a separatist policy. I pointed out that the land question was at the root of the difficulty in Ireland, and urged a full enquiry into this question. If the Commission which was about to be appointed should report that the judicial rents were too high I expressed my opinion that they would have to be reduced. In the meantime I should support the Government in maintaining the authority of the law.

On August 28 I received the following letter from Bright:

Stanley,  
Perthshire, N.B.  
August 28, 1886.

My dear Chamberlain,

There is no chance of my being able to accept your kind invitation for the 1st of September.

I have fled from London and do not wish to return during the remainder of the Session.

I look on the chaos with something like disgust—and wonder that anyone should place the blame anywhere but on Mr Gladstone, at whose door lies the confusion which prevails.

I hope he may not return to office until purged of the errors which now afflict him.

I see his pamphlet is now out—so is the Parnellite conspiracy pamphlet. The latter is I believe in the main true, and shows into what hands the late Government Bill would have committed the fortunes and the future of Ireland.

We have dry weather here—the rivers are very low, and there is no fishing.

Always sincerely yours,  
JOHN BRIGHT

Shortly afterwards I went to Birmingham, and did not take any further part in the proceedings of the House of Commons at the end of the Session.

On October 7 I went to Constantinople and Greece, returning on December 13. When I got back I had several communications with Randolph Churchill as to the programme of the Government for next Session. It was intended to produce a Local Government Bill for England. In connection with this I protested strongly against proposals which were under consideration for *ex-officio* representatives on the new County Councils and also against an alternative suggestion for a limitation of the rating powers of these new authorities.

At that time I was led to believe that the Cabinet were divided—that there was a distinctly reactionary party among them as well as a progressive party of which Churchill was the leader. He expressed himself glad to have his hands strengthened by my expression of opinion and I communicated my views in the same sense to Hartington who was frequently consulted by Lord Salisbury.

On December 22 Churchill unexpectedly resigned. I had had no previous intimation of his intention but having regard to what he had told me I interpreted the event as meaning that the reactionary party in the Cabinet had gained the upper hand.

On the 23rd I spoke to the Council of the Western Division,<sup>1</sup> and in the course of my speech I said that I feared that the old Tory influence had gained the upper hand and warned Lord Salisbury that if there was any idea of carrying out a reactionary policy he must take all the responsibility of such a course and of its results upon the Unionist Alliance. I went on to say that this was an opportunity for the Gladstonian Party. They were agreed with us as to nine points out of ten. On all matters of policy affecting England, Scotland and Wales there was no substantial difference. Even in regard to Ireland there was much common ground. We were agreed, for instance, that the land question was the root of the Irish difficulty, and we were agreed generally as to the way in which a settlement of this matter

<sup>1</sup> The Liberal Divisional Council, West Birmingham.

might be arrived at. A few representative men meeting round a table would settle a programme on these points which all Liberals could accept. If this were done we might then go further. We were agreed to extend to Ireland the same privileges with regard to municipal government as were enjoyed by Great Britain and I appealed to the more moderate at least of the Gladstonian Party to carry out all those things in which we were agreed and to leave the only point of serious difference to the last.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Round Table Conference, 1886-7*

DECEMBER 24. Harcourt wrote to me that he had read my speech of the preceding night with the greatest satisfaction. Our temporary separation had been a cause of regret to him and he would rejoice at any prospect of healing the breach. He considered that I held forth the olive branch and was most anxious to co-operate. Speaking for himself, he is prepared in any case to act in this sense. What can be done to heal the breach? He suggests a meeting in London.

The same day I received a letter from Randolph Churchill in which he says, 'I own I did not think that I should have failed to persuade Lord S. to take a broad view of the situation. I had no choice but to go. He had been for weeks prepared for it and possibly courted the crash.' He adds, 'I cannot see how he [Hartington]<sup>1</sup> can join them for indeed their innate Toryism is rampant and irrepressible.'

December 26. I acknowledged Harcourt's letter with great appreciation of its kindly spirit and assurance of continued personal friendship. In answer to his appeal I said:

*In strict confidence and not to be mentioned unless you are yourself able fully to approve and adopt the suggestion, here is my notion.*

The land question in Ireland is the most urgent, whether you have regard to social order or to the Parliamentary position. If we were all agreed upon a strong land bill, the Irish members *must* support it. Their constituents would stand no nonsense on this point and would not allow the question to be postponed for Home Rule or anything else.

When I spoke of '3 Liberals round a table' I thought of you, Herschell and Fowler, as the three conspicuous Gladstonians who

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's parenthesis.

have done nothing to embitter the differences which have arisen and have shown moderation and fairness throughout. To such a Committee I would gladly submit in detail various suggestions for dealing with the land question. I should have confidence that you at least would not use these confidential proposals in subsequent public discussion, nor take advantage of my frankness and endeavours to come to an agreement in order to accuse me afterwards of inconsistency and double dealing.

The Committee would also of course be in possession of the views of Mr Gladstone and of any other leader who has given study to the subject.

I believe that they could and would elaborate a scheme which, with some mutual concession, we might all accept.

In the course of their enquiry I imagine they would find it necessary to formulate some scheme of local or municipal government and on this branch of the subject also I do not anticipate that there could be any serious difficulty in arriving at a common conclusion.

If the Committee were successful thus far, I for one should begin to entertain hopes of further agreement. At the present time there appears to be a cardinal difference of opinion between Mr Gladstone and the Liberal Unionist leaders on the subject of an Irish Parliament.

I cannot pretend to see my way as yet out of this difficulty but time and full discussion may work miracles.

The Committee might possibly discover some means of reconciling apparently inconsistent views—or at least of reducing disagreement to a minimum.

In any case my opinion is that some mediating influence must be found, if the leaders are once more to be brought together.

In mentioning names my only object is to indicate the nature of the influence that is likely to be most effective. Others might be found as good or better, but I feel that they ought to be chosen among those who have not done anything to accentuate differences.

And, lastly, to prevent misunderstanding I think I ought to say that I do not contemplate complete personal reunion as the result of any conference or mediation. I have been most bitterly wounded by the injustice and the ingratitude of former associates and I feel that, for me at any rate, a temporary effacement is a

necessary prelude to any future usefulness. But I am sincerely impressed with the danger to Liberalism, to all for which I have struggled and laboured—if present dissensions are allowed to continue.

Hitherto I have done nothing—or very little—to organize opposition to Mr Gladstone's proposals; but this must come and when a Liberal or Radical Unionist Committee is established in every constituency, the Tories will have an easy time of it, and all that I care for in politics will be indefinitely postponed.

I have written freely but with the most earnest desire to advance this practical object which we both have in view. If you think there is nothing in my suggestions put them in the waste paper basket without hesitation but

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

December 28. Harcourt writes that my letter has given him 'supreme satisfaction' and is in spirit and substance a 'solid basis for reunion'.

What I understand you to propose is that we should agree upon a certain mediatory process by which the discordant sections may arrive at a common understanding and at least ascertain by mutual discussion how far their views may be brought into accord. This seems most reasonable and desirable, and if it had been done nine months ago we should not be now in our present plight. It is surely worth while making all sacrifices short of the most vital principles to repair the ruin of the Liberal Party which exists for something more than Ireland and Irish questions alone.

He again pressed for a personal interview and on December 30 I saw him in Grafton Street,<sup>1</sup> after which I made the following memorandum of the interview:

[*Memorandum*]

Thursday, December 30, 1886. Saw Harcourt at Grafton Street. He told me he had written to Mr Gladstone immediately

<sup>1</sup> Harcourt's London house.

on reading my speech and had received reply dated 27 December from which he read passages to the effect that the speech was an important event and one which ought to lead to a *modus vivendi* in the Liberal Party. That he doubted if this would be found in publicly proclaiming the abandonment or postponement of Home Rule in order to substitute a land scheme but that if (or as) Home Rule was for the present impossible it was desirable to see if some other scheme, in the nature of Local Government and good in itself though not going the length they wished, might not be found which would be acceptable (1) to the majority of the Liberal Party, (2) to the Irish representatives, and (3) to the Dissident Liberals or any section of them.

Harcourt proceeded to say that they could not consent to exclude the subject of Home Rule from any discussion by such a conference as I had proposed and he referred to passages in my speeches and letters in favour of a wide extension of self-government subject to proper safeguards.

I said I was ready to stand by previous utterances but was especially anxious that they should not be misunderstood. I did not believe in the possibility of granting an Irish Parliament without endangering the Union. I did not think that Ireland could be recognized as a Nation without conceding Separation. Ireland was a Province—as Nova Scotia was a province of Canada and the cardinal difference between Mr G. and myself was that he had treated the question from the point of view of the separate Nationality of Ireland, while I had regarded it from the point of view of a State or Province. I was not hopeful that this difference could be surmounted and if the intention was to make it the first subject of discussion I should be unwilling to enter the conference. What I hoped was that we should take into consideration first the matters on which agreement was probable. If we were successful so far, I should be quite ready to see if we could not go further together and to discuss any alternative plans of self-government which might be brought forward as substitutes for Mr Gladstone's Bill.

In the course of further conversation I expressed readiness to meet J. Morley with the others named and to ask Trevelyan to join.

I also agreed to consult Hartington and see if he would join also.



Friday December 31. Saw Harcourt again. He showed me a letter he had written to Mr Gladstone in which he said my proposal was that a few should meet as an amicable but informal Committee and without binding authority to discuss: (1) The Land Question, (2) The Local Government Question, and (3) what form of legislature could be safely granted to Ireland. He urged acceptance of this as tending to reduce points of disagreement and remove all personal feeling from the controversy.

I objected to this letter:

(1) That I had not *proposed* to discuss an Irish Legislature at all. I had only agreed that it need not be formally excluded and might be discussed if thought desirable.

(2) That the words 'what form of legislature could be granted' must not be taken to imply that I thought any form of single legislature could safely be conceded. At present the largest concession I was able to contemplate was some form of Provincial Assemblies or Councils.

Harcourt said that he did not intend to commit me to anything more than my past speeches—and that it was distinctly understood that if any plan were proposed I should be free to object to it. All he wanted was the understanding that such possible plans or suggestions were not to be absolutely excluded from discussion. He pointed out that if they were to agree in terms to such an exclusion it would be looked upon as a complete surrender and betrayal of their cause.

J. Morley was sent for from the Athenaeum. He agreed in what had been done. I referred to the arrogant and unconciliatory tone of articles in *Daily News* and he and Harcourt promised to try and secure an alteration.

We all agreed that the next step must come from Mr Gladstone and be the official reply to my speech. H. and M. promised to write to Mr G. and suggest a letter in similar terms to the private letter from him to H. dated 27th.

In conversation afterwards Morley told me that Mr G. and all of them recognized that Home Rule in the sense of Mr G.'s Bill was impossible at present. It might be inevitable in the future but it was not now a practical question. Mr G. was much exercised at the idea of going to his grave having just smashed the Liberal

Party and was therefore most conciliatory and anxious for re-union. He thought that Home Rule being out of the question during his lifetime he would still have the credit of foresight and patriotism if it came later as he assumed it would, but in the meantime history would deal harshly with him if he did not do his best to prevent the disorganization and defeat of the Party which had followed him so long.

1887. January. Harcourt writes that he received a 'telegram from the G.O.M. . . . showing that the "spirit of Barkis is willing".'

January 2. I replied expressing satisfaction at the prospect and said:

I continue to attach the utmost importance to the *order* of our friendly discussion. By taking first the subjects on which agreement is probable we make any future and further proceedings more hopeful, and although I cannot feel sanguine at present as to complete accord on the whole of the Irish question, it will be a great point gained to have narrowed the issues and to have secured a considerable amount of common ground.

On the same day I wrote to Hartington:

I wish you saw your way to join us. Not only would you exercise great influence on the discussion, but your presence being known would give confidence to our friends and silence all rumours as to differences in the Liberal Unionist ranks.

January 3. Harcourt enclosed copy of a letter from Mr Gladstone intended for publication and subsequently printed in the newspapers, and also a private letter accompanying it which was strictly private and confidential.

Hawarden Castle,  
Chester.

January 2, 1887.

My dear Harcourt,

As I wrote to you some days ago, I consider the recent speech of Mr Chamberlain at Birmingham to be an important fact of which due account ought to be taken.



*Picture Post Library*

SIR GEORGE OTTO TRFVELYAN

1838-1928



*Picture Post Library*

HERBERT GLADSTONE

1854-1930

GEORGE JOACHIM GOSCHEN  
1831-1907



WILLIAM HENRY SPILL  
1825-91



I think that, if handled on all sides in a proper spirit, it ought to lead to what I may term a *modus vivendi* in the Liberal Party.

I should be very glad if any means could be found for bringing about a free discussion of the points of difference, with a view to arriving at some understanding for such common action as may be consistent with our respective principles; or at least of reducing to a minimum the divergences of opinion on the Irish Question in its several parts and branches.

Having, as you may remember, spoken in this sense when you were here some weeks ago, I shall not excite your surprise by retaining the opinion now that some encouragement has been given to it by an occurrence such as the recent speech of Mr Chamberlain.

And I think that if such a consultation is to take place it is desirable that there should be no concealment about it, because rumour in these cases easily springs up and travels fast to untrue and premature conclusions. You are therefore at liberty to make such use of this letter as you may think proper.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE

Extracts from private letter of Mr Gladstone to Sir W. Harcourt:

January 1, 1887.

1. I learn with pleasure of the intention of some of my colleagues to confer with Mr Chamberlain and Sir G. Trevelyan upon the general view indicated by me in a letter of December 27 last to you and again in a letter of the present date, *viz.* that we should in a friendly spirit consider how far a *modus vivendi* is attainable between the late Government and any of those who resisted their Irish Bill.
2. By a *modus vivendi* I understand a partial agreement without prejudice to what is beyond it supplying a plan for present action and prompted by a desire that a wider accommodation may in due season be found practicable.
3. I conceive that in a conference of this nature opinions given on one point may materially depend on what is thought on some other point, and that all who take part are at liberty to resume

their previous attitude unless in so far as they may arrive at any understanding otherwise.

4. I assume it to be impossible for Mr Chamberlain as it evidently is for us to recede from the main contentions or to do anything in disparagement of it; but it stands to be considered,

a. What we can arrange in the way of common action, b. How we can handle our differences and how far we can reserve them.

5. As to a. the possible bases for common action seem to be

α Some bill on the lines of a Liberal Local Government for Ireland.

β Bills of Liberal Policy on points accepted by the whole party or motions deemed politic, e.g. public expenditure, if so deemed.

γ Procedure. To press our own opinions in the sense of more Devolution and Clôture by majority.

6. As to the composition of the Conference *ad hoc* I am glad that Sir G. Trevelyan is to accompany Chamberlain. As this has been a Cabinet matter all along I should incline to confining it to 3 of the late Cabinet, 2 of whom should be yourself and Morley.

7. While well disposed to any really useful measure and strongly impressed with the necessity of avoiding anything equivocal in our general position, I am more anxious for harmony than for activity, and have only to add my hearty good wishes with the assurance that this letter is meant to be useful as far as it may—not to be obstructive.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

Harcourt said that he did not differ from me as to the desirability of taking subjects in the order of most agreement but was disposed to think that Local Government might even on that ground come first. He said that there would be much jealousy and heartburning in the party if H. Fowler were made one of the 'plenipos'. Neither Mr Gladstone nor J. Morley affected the nomination, and it would weaken their hands in managing their people. It was subsequently agreed therefore that the representatives on the Gladstonian side should be Harcourt, Morley and Herschell.

I replied, January 4:

The extracts from Mr Gladstone's private letter are *most encouraging and most satisfactory*. I believe that I could accept every word as correctly indicating my position as well as his.

Is it really necessary to treat these extracts, which seem to me to be in fact the Reference for the Committee, as absolutely secret?

In a subsequent note<sup>1</sup> I said:

In re-reading Mr G.'s private letter before returning it to you I am struck by the absence of all reference to the Land Question. I sincerely hope that this was not intentional. The Land Question is of urgent importance—in Ulster as much as anywhere—and no solution of the Irish problem can be other than empirical [*sic*] which neglects this radical cause of discontent and agitation.

The same day I wrote to Hartington:

*Confidential*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
January 4, 1887.

My dear Hartington,

I have received Mr G's reply and I understand that it will be published to-day.

By *modus vivendi* we understand the possibility of partial agreement without prejudice to anything further and both parties are at full liberty to resume at any time their original attitude.

Nothing will induce me to consent to a Parliament in Dublin with an executive dependent upon it. On the other hand Mr G. can hardly be expected to proclaim that he has entirely abandoned what he has declared to be a cardinal principle.

But the Conference will show 1st whether we can agree on other branches of the Irish question viz. the Land and Local Government: 2nd whether there is any *tertium quid*—any alternative to an Irish Parliament on which we can also agree as good in itself without requiring from either side any formal repudiation of previously expressed opinions.

<sup>1</sup> January 4, 1887.

You know the reasons which lead me to think your presence on the Committee would be very desirable. It is now for you to decide.

If you finally declare in the negative, can you see your way to announce at once that the negotiations which have resulted in our Conference have been fully reported to you?—and (in some general terms) that though you have felt it inexpedient to join at this stage and are not sanguine as to the result, yet that you heartily desire reunion provided that it can be brought about without danger to the principles that you have advocated in Irish Government.

Such an announcement might do much to prevent misinterpretation and to prove that for the defence of the Union we are still entirely agreed.

Yours sincerely,  
J. CHAMBERLAIN

A letter from Hartington<sup>1</sup> crossed mine. In this he says that he could not join any conference in which Home Rule is to be treated as a subject for discussion. He is not anxious for reunion until he knows Mr Gladstone's position towards Home Rule—whether it is abandoned or postponed.

January 5. Harcourt writes:

On the question of *Land* . . . I do not wish you to suppose that Mr G. by any means desires to exclude that important branch of the question.

January 6. I wrote to Hartington:

*Confidential*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
January 6, 1887.

My dear Hartington,

I consider that the only basis of the Conference is to be found in my speech of December 23 and Mr Gladstone's letter to Harcourt.

<sup>1</sup> January 4, 1887.



I have already informed you of the nature of my conversation with the latter.

There is nothing in subsequent correspondence of any importance except a private letter of Mr G.'s which has been shown to me, but which I am strictly forbidden to communicate to anyone.

It is therefore only interesting to me as indicating Mr Gladstone's personal disposition—in which relation it is satisfactory.

I do not think it would be possible or desirable to have any more definite basis for a discussion. I have always been ready to discuss either with friends or opponents the whole of the Irish question, and I do not fear that any Conferences will alter the opinions that I have publicly expressed.

I can hardly expect that Mr Gladstone will surrender his opinions either, but it is possible that—admitting his inability to give effect to them now—he may be ready to lay them aside either absolutely or in favour of some substitutes which discussion may suggest.

I think, as I always have done, that Land ought to be dealt with first—that there is a possibility of agreement on this branch of the question—and that if it were once settled the Home Rule agitation might be reduced to manageable proportions.

It is in answer to a statement to this effect that Mr G. authorizes and approves a Conference. Is not this in itself as great a concession as can reasonably be asked for at this stage?

I enclose a statement of my position published in the *Birmingham Daily Post* before Mr Gladstone's letter was received.<sup>1</sup>

- I will only add that if you joined the Conference you would immensely strengthen Trevelyan and myself in limiting the discussion to points on which agreement is practicable, while if any new proposal—as a substitute for Mr G.'s Home Rule Bill—were mooted, you would be able to prevent any admission or concession on our part which you thought to be compromising the Unionist position. •

If you are not present, we must do our best under the circum-

<sup>1</sup> The *Birmingham Daily Post* of January 5, 1887, published an account of an interview with Chamberlain in which he denied that he had made 'fresh proposals towards the reunion of the Liberal Party', and expressed the belief that Gladstone's supporters were tired of the existing situation and were becoming convinced that Home Rule was impossible.

stances; but as we both are probably willing to go rather further in the direction of Self Government than you are, there is a danger that—in your absence—we may drift still further apart.

I believe that if you had joined Mr G.'s Government we should have been strong enough to have prevented the introduction of the Home Rule Bill—and in any case we should have been able to present a united and concerted opposition without the shades of difference which sometimes rather embarrassed our joint action.

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Hartington replied enclosing a letter which I might publish if I wished, although he thought it probable that I should not do so. I used the discretion allowed me and did not think it necessary to publish the letter.

Chatsworth.

January 7, 1887.

My dear Chamberlain,

As the negotiations of the progress of which you have kept me informed seem likely to result in the discussion which you have invited it is necessary for me to decide whether I can, as you have suggested, take part in it.

I need hardly say that I should welcome a successful issue of this Conference on the basis of the suggestions in your speech, not only as reuniting the Liberal party, but because it might bring about a solution of some Irish difficulties by the general concurrence of all parties, which I have always earnestly desired. But if there is a disposition to come to an agreement which it would be possible for us as Unionists to accept, my presence is unnecessary and might tend to excite rather than remove differences.

On the other hand, I do not understand that the basis of discussion which you suggested has been definitely accepted; and I should see but little use in re-opening the discussion on the subject of Home Rule. It may appear, at least to some, that the most probable result of the Conference would be to bring about a partial reconciliation of the party, while the great differences which have divided us still remain. All that I have said at and since the General Election, and the course which I have taken in the last few days precludes me from promoting such a reunion of

the Liberal party as would weaken or destroy the existing securities for the Union, until we can feel a greater confidence in the future policy of the party on what we hold to be essential points.

While therefore I think that my presence would do little to promote the substantial agreement which we all desire, it seems to me that it might be open to misconstruction of a nature which I am sure you do not anticipate and would not admit to be reasonable, but which I think it especially necessary for me to avoid.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON

On January 10 Dilke wrote to me that 'Willie Bright'<sup>1</sup> whom he had just seen 'let fall a word which may have meaning in it: "the difficulty is to keep Mr G. in the Gladstonian party"'. Dilke says that Morley had told him that he had seen Parnell who was '*not* uncompromising'.

The fact is that at this moment there was great depression in the Gladstonian ranks especially among the leaders, and I believe that there was a genuine desire to secure reunion and a readiness to make considerable sacrifices with that object. The situation changed later on when the intention of the Government to introduce the Crimes Bill became known as the Gladstonian leaders and Mr Gladstone himself especially relied on the unpopularity of this measure to bring about a complete change in public opinion.

The Conference met at Harcourt's house in Grafton Street on January 13 and 14. The following is the memorandum of the proceedings drawn up by me at the time:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Bright; second son of John Bright and Liberal M.P.

<sup>2</sup> In the memorandum that follows Chamberlain uses the abbreviations 'H' and 'Ht.' At first sight it might appear that the former denoted Herschell and the latter Harcourt. Since, however, 'H' occurs more frequently than 'Ht.', it seems possible that Chamberlain used both abbreviations indiscriminately to denote Harcourt, who appears to have taken a more active part in the discussions than Herschell.

## [Memorandum]

No. 1. January 13. Harcourt read statement of circumstances leading to meeting and copy of extracts from Mr G.'s private letter previously sent to me.

Agreed that entire secrecy to be observed as to discussions and if no agreement come to the whole conversations to be treated as '*non avenues*'.

At H.'s request J.C. read and explained suggestions for Land Scheme.<sup>1</sup>

Harcourt stated favourable inclination towards method of dealing with landlords but expressed doubt as to security.

J.C. pointed out that no absolute security existed for any plan, and this applied whether there was a Home Rule plan connected with Land Scheme or not.

J. Morley argued that an Irish Parliament or Irish central authority could alone compel fulfilment of obligations.

J.C. argued that more control was exercisable over a subordinate local body than over an Irish Parliament, and urged that Land Scheme was independent of question of Home Rule which might be reserved. If Conference could agree on Land scheme, it would be possible afterwards either to tack it on to an Irish Parliament, or to any other form of local authority. In any case there must be some such body as a County Board to deal directly with the tenants.

Agreed to treat scheme as affording fair basis for further discussion and meanwhile copy to be circulated.

H. then raised question of Irish legislative authority and asked if J.C. still adhered to his views about Canadian Constitution expressed in H. of C.

J.C. replied in affirmative, and said that Canada Act 1867 was very suggestive basis of discussion.

Ht. referred to Leeds Resolution<sup>2</sup> and asked if J.C. also adhered to opinion that subject to insertion of words 'legislative authority

<sup>1</sup> 'See scheme in *A Unionist Policy for Ireland*.' (Note by Chamberlain in margin of MS.)

<sup>2</sup> The resolution passed at the Leeds conference of the National Liberal Federation on November 3, 1886, in favour of the creation of 'an Irish legislative body for the management of what Parliament should decide to be distinctively Irish affairs'.

or authorities' it offered nothing to which he could object. J.C. agreed.

J. Morley seemed to agree to take Leeds Resolutions and Canada Act as a basis of discussion. Not a word was said about 'a Parliament in Dublin and an Executive dependent upon it'.

Herschell appeared favourably inclined to Land Scheme. Trevelyan also spoke favourably. He referred to Hartington's four points of objection to Mr G.'s scheme of Home Rule as implying assent to a large scheme.

No. 2. January 14, 1887. The discussion was founded on the terms of the Act constituting the Federal Constitution of Canada.

It was agreed generally that the Imperial Parliament must have similar authority over local legislature to that possessed by Dominion Parliament over Provincial legislatures of Canada.

Question raised as to necessity for any special provisions for maintaining the right of revision and control apart from the Veto possessed by the Crown over all Colonial legislation.

It was agreed that Powers of Provincial legislature must be specifically enumerated.

Question raised as to limitations to be placed by statute on exercise of powers conceded to Provincial legislatures. J. Morley suggested adoption of articles providing for liberty of subject and justice in American Constitution. J.C. suggested adoption of precedent in Canada as regards Education and to be applied to questions of civil rights and property. These statutory conditions might prohibit all preferential legislation in favour of classes or individuals—and might forbid any man's property to be taken without due compensation. United States condition forbidding interference with contract seems to go too far and would have prevented the Land Act of 1881.

Agreed that Provincial Legislature must have some kind of Executive to carry out its work. No difficulty with regard to Local Government, Public Works or Education.

But question raised as to Police.

It was generally admitted that the Imperial Government shall have some civil force for executing authority of Imperial Parliament and decrees of any court. (Query. Constabulary or any part of the existing force of Constabulary?)

Question as to local Police, its duties and control. J.C. in favour of a strictly municipal police for each district or borough. Trevelyan doubtful.

Judges to be appointed and paid by the Imperial Government as in case of Canada.

Question raised as to Constitution of Provincial Legislatures. Should there be one or two Chambers? Agreed that except for Military and Naval administration and for Imperial Police no necessity for independent Imperial administration in Ireland. Irish Imperial business may be in charge of Department in London.

Question raised as to separate treatment of Ulster or part of Ulster. J.C. declared this to be fundamental. Herschell suggested separation of certain Irish business and delegations to meet in Dublin for matters in which all Ireland interested.

It was suggested that some power should be given to Ulster or to some part of Ulster to join the Southern legislature if desired. There might be for instance a plebiscite of counties to decide whether they would belong to Northern or Southern Provinces. This plebiscite might be taken either now or at the expiry of a fixed time.

Question raised as to extent of future Irish representation at Westminster. Harcourt in favour of allowing them to vote on all subjects, but all others agreed this would be impossible. Morley still desired to exclude them altogether.

With the exception of the question of separate treatment of Ulster on which Morley desired to consult with others, all the other questions raised were dealt with as matters of detail to be determined by further discussion and which did not raise question of fundamental principle.

January 18. Harcourt wrote that he had reported results of the Conference to Hawarden, and that the 'old man is friendly'.

January 22. I had to speak at Hawick, where Sir George Trevelyan was presented with a portrait by his supporters.

January 24. Harcourt wrote that he approved the tone and spirit of my speech but regretted that I had made an attack on the Irish. 'They may deserve it,' he said, 'but it is no good exasperating people who after all must be parties to any settlement.'

January 25. Harcourt writes that Mr Gladstone 'expresses himself highly satisfied with the Hawick [ ]<sup>1</sup> and is evidently favourably impressed with the general outlines of your land scheme'.

On January 29 I had to speak again to my constituents in the Town Hall. I afterwards heard that some offence was given by a reference made in this speech to the proceedings at the Leeds Conference of the National Liberal Federation, but the objections taken were not serious and the third meeting of the Round Table Conference was held at Trevelyan's on February 14. The following is the memorandum of the proceedings:

[*Memorandum*]

No. 3. February 14, 1887. At Sir G. Trevelyan's.

After dinner Harcourt asked for explanations on certain points of J.C.'s Land Scheme. These were discussed but no objection was taken on principle to any point in the scheme.

The Home Rule question was then discussed with special reference to Ulster and the administration of Justice.

J.C. represented that separate treatment of Ulster was fundamental. Harcourt and Morley said there was great difficulty, as Parnell objected, 1, that it would destroy the chance of giving full satisfaction to the idea of Nationality, and, 2, that it would interfere seriously with the financial position of the Dublin authority.

As regards Law and Order, J. Morley proposed as compromise that the Crown should have veto for ten years on the nomination of judges. J.C. declined to accept this proposal.

With exception of J.C. the Conference agreed that the Lord-Lieutenant or some similar official must continue to represent Executive authority of Crown.

It was then agreed that Morley and Herschell should further consider Land Scheme with special object of answering the questions reserved in J.C.'s draft.

And that Harcourt should prepare draft of Home Rule scheme on Canadian basis, leaving as reserved questions the points on which no agreement had been as yet arrived at. •

<sup>1</sup> Word omitted in MS. of Harcourt's letter. 'Speech' was presumably the word intended.

At this time the situation was extremely difficult. On the Gladstonian side Labouchere and the extreme party together with a portion of the Irish were intensely hostile to any arrangement and worked in the press and elsewhere to bring the negotiations to nought. I strongly suspected that John Morley himself was not anxious to come to terms. One of the concessions to be made by them was the maintenance of Irish representation at Westminster and Morley said that although he would accept it in the Conference he should have to consider his own position afterwards and might probably have to retire altogether. He felt at that time that his own declaration on the subject had been so strong that he could not consistently take active part in promoting any scheme which did not carry out what he had asserted to be a cardinal point of the original Home Rule proposals. I could not doubt that the consideration of the result of an agreement on his own position weighed with him and the indications in the press and in letters which I received from various quarters led me to think that he would not regret the failure of the Conference.

On the other hand the Unionists, both Liberal and Conservatives, were very uneasy and anxious to know what was going on. They were afraid that I should be willing to concede too much and were confirmed in this impression by the public statements of Morley and many of the Radical section who gave it to be understood that no concession was to be made to me except upon insignificant points of detail. Mr Gladstone wrote a letter in which he laid the blame of all postponement of Liberal legislation and especially of Welsh Disestablishment on the Liberal Unionists. I was invited by the Editor of the *Baptist* newspaper<sup>1</sup> to reply to this and did so in a letter which was published on February 25 and in which I said:

"

If the Welsh constituencies intended to show their approval of Mr Gladstone's Irish policy, and to support his contention that no legislation for Scotland or Wales could be undertaken, or even contemplated, until the Irish question had been settled on his lines,

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Stockwell.



then they have no right whatever to complain of the delay of their hopes, and they must wait patiently until the country has changed its mind, and is prepared to hand over the minority in Ireland to the tender mercies of Mr Parnell and the Irish League.

I pointed out that the conversion of the country to the justice of such a surrender might take ten or twenty years and might even never be accomplished, and said:

But whether the process occupies a generation or a century 'poor little Wales' must wait until Mr Parnell is satisfied and Mr Gladstone's policy adopted. They will not wait alone. The crofters of Scotland and the agricultural labourers of England will keep them company. Thirty-two millions of people must go without much-needed legislation because three million are disloyal.

I asked whether the Nonconformists of Wales were prepared to accept the situation. I said that they had hitherto supported without much examination the Irish Bills of Mr Gladstone under the impression that they were thereby promoting the cause of Disestablishment in Wales. I continued:

So long as the majority of the Liberal party is committed to proposals which a large section of Liberals and Radicals firmly believe to be dangerous to the best interests of the United Kingdom, unjust to the minority of the Irish people, and certain to end in the disruption of the Empire, so long the party will remain shattered and impotent and all reform will be indefinitely postponed.

I reminded the Welsh Nonconformists that some of the best and most earnest friends of Disestablishment were in the Liberal Unionist ranks and were now branded by the leaders of Welsh Dissent as traitors and deserters. I pointed out that the only wise and prudent course for Welsh Nonconformists was to press on their leaders the absolute necessity for reuniting the Liberal party so that reforms on which all Liberals were practically agreed might be proceeded with. I concluded by saying:

Some of the former leaders of the Liberal party are now engaged in this necessary work of reconciliation. They require, and they ought to have, the support and sympathy of all who desire that remedial legislation should be at once resumed. The issue of the Round Table Conference will decide much more than the Irish question. It will decide the immediate future of the Liberal party, and whether or no all Liberal reform is to be indefinitely adjourned.

On February 25 Harcourt wrote a very strong letter<sup>1</sup> in which he bitterly complained of my letter to the *Baptist*. He described it as a studied and irritating attack on Mr Gladstone and his friends, and said that it had provoked almost fury among the Gladstonians. I replied:

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.

February 26, 1887.

My dear Harcourt,

I thank you for writing so plainly. I will do the same. I agree with you that our task is almost impossible—there is so much sensitiveness and feeling *on both sides* that the difficulties are nearly unsurmountable.

You seem to think that I am bound, while negotiation is still incomplete, to take no notice whatever of all that is offensive and objectionable to me in the communications that proceed from leading Gladstonians, and that I am to pass over in silence their repeated asseverations that no change—no concession of any kind—is to be made by them and that I am only to be allowed to come back as they say after sufficient and complete acts of submission and penitence.

But I do not found myself only on the speeches of such men as Stansfeld, Campbell-Bannerman, and Sir C. Russell, although the tone of their speeches is disagreeable in the highest degree. Neither will I refer again to the outrageous attack made upon me by J. Morley at Newcastle—nor to the general line of the organ

<sup>1</sup> This letter, with subsequent correspondence, is printed in A. G. Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, ii. 33-7.

of the Party, the *Daily News*—but I must advert to the language used in recent letters and speeches by Mr Gladstone himself. When in Wales he took more than one opportunity of nailing his flag to the mast. Everyone who reads his recent letters must draw the inference that he adheres to the whole of the policy to which I and other Liberals objected, and that he is not prepared to make the slightest concession. The effect of these statements has been very marked. It is said in the Liberal papers, without exception, that as Mr Gladstone has declared that he will not give way, the only chance of reunion must lie in my 'caving in' and that this is what I am now doing. To use the words of J. Morley's organ [*sic*] at Newcastle, I am 'furtively preparing for surrender'.

From first to last there has never been the slightest indication on the part of any Gladstonian of an intention to make the slightest concession of any kind in order to meet the advances which I have openly made. What is the result? I get letters daily urging me not to sell the position and declaring that if I do the Unionists will not follow me.

I must point out to you that a compromise is one thing, but an abject surrender such as is attributed to me is another, and I cannot afford to give colour to such an accusation.

Now as regards my article. I do not admit that it bears the interpretation you put upon it. My view is and always has been that we are substantially agreed about principles and objects while we have differed about methods. I am prepared at any rate to accept your principles—will you agree to put aside your old methods and to see if any new method can be found less open to objection and equally consistent with the principle? If you or Mr Gladstone will publicly say that this is your intention, you will not again have reason to complain of the form of my justification or explanation.

But if it is not your intention—if you mean to stick to old methods and continue to give everyone the impression that you are immovable and that every sacrifice must come from me—then we have mistaken each other and we had better retire from an impossible position.

You say that I represent you and the Gladstonians as the obstacle to Liberal Reform. Why this is the charge which Mr Gladstone has brought against the Unionists times without number.

I say that without Liberal Union you can have no reform and I say that Liberal Union can only be secured by *mutual* and not by one-sided concession.

I should add that my article was really an answer to letters from the editor of the *Baptist*, who has written to point out that the effect of Mr Gladstone's recent statements was to throw the onus of the delay in all Liberal measures entirely on us.

You say that it is studiously offensive to repeat the phrase 'Poor little Wales'. I am totally unable to appreciate such ultra sensitiveness. I thought it was a good-humoured reference—you think it is malignant spite.

We look at all this from such different standpoints that agreement is almost impossible and the attempt to secure it only produces misapprehension.

I consider the present situation very grave. Never has party feeling run higher and a large section of politicians are apparently willing to run any risks, to accept any policy which can embarrass their opponents and make the Government of the country impossible. I have no sympathy with these tactics and if the future programme of the Liberal party is to include Plans of Campaign, Obstruction, and Heaven knows how many wild theories of revenge or destruction, I must stand aside or join to resist them.

The avowed object of the Gladstonians is to identify Mr Gladstone's Bill with Liberalism and to force out of the Party everyone who will not accept it. Then they hope by purely party tactics to get rid of the Tory Government and take their places.

I have hitherto done my best to prevent Hartington from joining a Coalition and I have always rejected the possibility of my doing so. But if things continue on their present footing I must either go out of politics altogether—or assist in forming some third Party that will strenuously resist the new Programme of Labouchere and Co. while ready to give effect to the older policy of Constructive Liberalism.

In any case let us remain friends—even if it is out of the question that we should be allies.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

February 26. Harcourt returned to the charge and said that the *Baptist* letter had produced graver results than he had an-

ticipated; that he had had a meeting with Mr Gladstone who had drawn up a memorandum on the points under discussion at the Conference which would have been submitted to me but for the present change in the situation. Mr Gladstone did not wish the ground which had been gained to be lost but under the altered circumstances they must take time to consider their course.

On the 27th I replied resenting the tone of his letters and pointing out that it was impossible for me to keep silence while Mr Gladstone himself and all his followers felt themselves perfectly free to say what they liked. I added that if, as I understood, his intention was to bring the negotiations to a close, I should be glad to agree as to the form in which the decision was announced.

On the 28th Harcourt wrote a friendly letter regretting that anything had been said to give offence. He complained that I paid too much attention to the 'chatter of irresponsible frivolity'. Mr Gladstone and his friends do not insist on the old method of attaining their object, but are willing favourably to consider a new one. He does not desire to break off the Conference, but was anxious to show me Mr Gladstone's memorandum when we met.

On the 29th I replied accepting his assurances and further explaining the difficulties of my position.

March 1. Harcourt again refers to the *Baptist* letter, and emphasizes his previous complaints.

March 1. I pressed for a decision one way or the other—either to close the negotiations or to continue them.

The situation is too strained to last. . . . No matter what pains I take—I am sure to offend you or your friends. On the other hand everything your friends say or do offends me.

March 2. Harcourt sees no need for haste. 'Indications of approximation on a still more important question are not wanting.' This I believe refers to Coercion, from which as I have already said the Gladstonians had great hopes of a change

in public opinion. At an interview which I subsequently had with him Harcourt said that they could not proceed further unless they were satisfied as to Lord Hartington's attitude. This was a new point. I believe there had been some reports that Lord Hartington was favourable to a liberal scheme of Local Government for Ireland and Mr Gladstone had some hope of being able to conduct a separate negotiation with him.

March 3. I wrote to Harcourt recapitulating the various steps in the negotiations. As to Hartington I agreed as to the importance of securing his assent and suggested another meeting of the Conference to which Hartington might be invited.

March 7. Harcourt wrote that Mr Gladstone after further considering the *Baptist* letter was not prepared to produce his memorandum and suggested the postponement of the discussion until a convenient season. This convenient season might arrive when we are able to ascertain Hartington's mind.

On this I asked Hartington to furnish me with his views in writing in order that I might communicate them to the Conference at its next meeting. He sent me the following:

*Confidential*

Devonshire House,  
Piccadilly, W.

March 6, 1887.

My dear Chamberlain,

I understand that you think that the time has arrived when you are entitled to have some expression of my views on the negotiations between yourself and Trevelyan, and some of Mr Gladstone's late colleagues, as to the progress of which you have informed me from time to time.

I must point out in the first place that up to the present time, proposals have not yet been made, much less accepted on any of the points under discussion which would make it possible for me to say that they are or are not in my judgment admissible. All that has hitherto taken place, so far as I understand, has been an exchange of views on certain points of agreement and of difference, and all that I can do under the circumstances is to try to give

you some indications of my views on these, as communicated to me by you.

The discussion seems to have assumed its most definite form on the question of Land Purchase, on which you have proposed the outlines of a scheme. I see nothing in the general character of this scheme to which I need take any objection in principle. But the question whether an equitable settlement could be proposed on the basis of your plan would depend on the decision on various points which have been left open, and which still as I understand have to be discussed. For instance, the value of the security offered to the landlords depends to a great degree on the question whether the Coupons of the Land Debenture Bonds are to be receivable in payment of Imperial taxes, which would virtually give them an Imperial guarantee, or of local taxes only. It would also depend on the amount of the contribution to be paid on account of local purposes. The principle on which estates are to be separately valued for the purpose of sale, and the conditions and circumstances which are to be taken into account are still undefined. The question whether the operation of the Act would be compulsory or optional seems almost vital in determining both the terms of compensation and the nature of the security to be offered. And the practicability of the proposals as regards the tenants depends on actuarial calculations which have to be verified. In short as to the Land Purchase scheme, I think I can only say that if you can succeed in working out the details in the conference, I should have no objection to a plan which would, if optional, give such inducements to landlords and tenants as would make its general adoption likely, or if compulsory, would give to the landlords fair compensation both as to terms and as to security.

As to Local Government, I understand your position to be, that while you have not undertaken, as on the Land question to submit proposals, you have expressed your willingness to discuss proposals, provided that the measure of last year is definitely withdrawn, and subject to the conditions which you have stated in your speeches. Further, you have insisted, not as new conditions, but as consequences of those which you have previously contended for, that Ulster or a part of Ulster should be represented by a separate Council, that the Judges should be appointed by the Imperial Parliament, and that the Irish Constabulary should be maintained and controlled by the same authority.

I believe that your conditions do not essentially differ from those which I attempted to formulate last year in my address to my constituents. I do not consider that they were complete or exhaustive, but I have no desire to make them more stringent. All that I wish to add with reference to the present proceedings is that it is necessary that any scheme which professes to comply with them should offer a reasonable probability of being a practical one, having regard to the circumstances of Ireland and the temper of the leaders of the Irish people. It would not be very difficult to devise several schemes for the extension of local self-government in Scotland which might be tried without much risk, because the demand in Scotland such as it is, is on the part of the vast majority, really limited to local self-government. But in Ireland the demand is, on the part of a large section at all events of the people and their leaders a demand for national recognition; and it is certain that unless the provisions for the maintenance of the authority of the Imperial Parliament and Government are made strong, simple and effective, the concession which may be made will be used for the purpose of extorting complete separation and independence. For this reason, I doubt the applicability of the precedent of the constitution of the Dominion of Canada. I think that this constitution provides no sufficient guarantees for the maintenance of the power of the Dominion over the Provincial Governments except the desire of the Provinces for Union, which prompted the Federation. I do not refer to the absence of a powerful Dominion force, or to the remoteness of the Imperial forces, in which respect Great Britain would have advantages in the case of Ireland, which the Dominion Government lacks in the case of the Provinces. I refer to the possibilities under the Canadian Constitution of legal, constitutional, parliamentary resistance to the superior authority which it seems to me would be fatal, if made use of, as they probably would be in Ireland. For this reason it has seemed to me that it might possibly be safer to look for a solution in the direction not of subordinate Parliamentary institutions or subordinate responsible Governments such as have been adopted in our Colonies, but of such extended municipal institutions and powers as have been conferred on our large cities, and as are proposed to be conferred upon Counties. No doubt the powers conferred on such Councils would be rather administrative and executive than legislative, but



certain legislative powers would not necessarily be excluded; and it seems to me that the Irish demand so far as it is a reasonable one is rather for administrative and executive than for legislative control over local affairs.

I am very far from saying that I have a clear idea of the extent to which this principle might be applied to solve the Irish question. Neither do I say that the difficulties of the subordinate responsible government are insuperable. But I feel strongly the necessity of looking at any scheme from the point of view of distrust as well as of confidence, and of bearing in mind the danger of assuming that a scheme which might work admirably in the case of a people which desires Union would be prudent in the opposite case of a people who have been taught to desire the largest possible measure of separation.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

HARTINGTON

I replied as follows :

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

March 7, 1887.

My dear Hartington,

I am much obliged by your letter of the 6th inst. I shall have much to say to you on the points raised when the proper time comes, but I imagine that you agree with me that the first step now is to see how far Mr Gladstone and his late colleagues assent to the fundamental conditions on which you and I alike insist. I have therefore written to Harcourt to tell him that I have a letter from you which you have authorized me to communicate to him at the proper time, and that you are not willing to enter on any conference until you know that your conditions are accepted.

I therefore press him to arrange for a meeting at once to consider Mr Gladstone's memorandum on our discussions and your letter.

Failing this I shall consider that he wishes to break off negotiations and shall act accordingly.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

March 7. I wrote to Harcourt accordingly and received a long letter repeating his views as to the *Baptist* letter and refusing either to break off the Conference or to go on with it at once.

March 8. I wrote to him that it was no use continuing the correspondence. I accepted his decision and accordingly the matter came to an end, and all hope of reunion was for the time abandoned.

I do not think that the reasons given by Harcourt were the only ones or the most important in determining their action. I am convinced that as the negotiations proceeded they anticipated more and more difficulty from the extreme section. The *Baptist* letter gave them some excuse although it was drawn forth and almost made necessary by the provocation from the other side. But they felt that if the Conference ended in the adoption of a Land Scheme proposed by me, and of a Local Government Scheme based upon the internal constitution of Canada, it would be held to be a victory for my views, and would not be accepted by a large number of their followers. At the same time new hopes were created by the introduction of the Coercion Bill and they determined in any case to wait the result of this before proceeding in the direction of any concession.

At the end of the month, March 31, I received intimation separately from Lady Hayter and also from Lord Thring that Mr Gladstone regretted the failure of the Conference and would be glad to talk matters over with me, if it could be done privately and without any committal. I expressed my desire to meet him, and on April 3 I received from him the following letter:

*Secret*

Dollis Hill, N.W.

April 3, 1887.

My dear Chamberlain,

I understand from my wife that you kindly said to her last evening that you were desirous to see me, provided I entertained a similar desire, that you were of opinion as I am any such conversation had better be so held as not to be talked of, and that having to leave town on Wednesday you would suggest Tuesday morning as the convenient opportunity.

I will explain as clearly as I can the state of my mind on a subject which public gossip had made into a matter of some delicacy.

I am willing and gladly willing to see any old colleague or friend who believes that an interview might bring about a removal or mitigation of differences.

It appears to me at a first view that while considerable progress has been made on the subjects of Irish Land Purchase and Government, Coercion and Closure have come in to widen the breach and that the consideration of these comes first to hand.

I observe that you have maintained your freedom of action on Coercion for the coming stages, but I do not know the state of your mind about it so as to be justified in taking any initiative as to conversation upon it, though gladly willing to converse as I have stated above.

With respect to Closure the case is different. I believe you said you were ready and desirous to remove this most unhappy intervention of the Chair and upon this question I should hope there was a ground laid for a useful co-operation which would aim at the removal of a very serious mischief. I should certainly wish to converse on the subject with my friends, which however I know could not be done to-morrow; and you might have heard further from me on the subject. I am not in a position to add much probably to what I said last night but if you think progress can be made, I then *desire* the conversation, in which we might try.

We are at one mile from Kingsbury-Neasden Station and would readily send to meet you by any train arriving about noon on Tuesday.

My impression is that, on the point I have last named, you have before you an opening, without loss of freedom, for a great public service.

Yours sincerely,

W. E. GLADSTONE

This letter referred to the two new points which had arisen since the negotiations had begun—namely Coercion and the Closure Resolutions which had been brought into the House by the Government.

I replied:

*Secret*

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

April 4, 1887.

My dear Mr Gladstone,

I thank you sincerely for your kind letter of yesterday. I do entertain the hope that a personal interview might have good results, and in any case I feel that it would be a great advantage to me if I knew more of your mind in regard to the present very grave situation.

Accordingly, unless I hear from you by telegraph to the contrary, I will drive over to Dollis Hill to-morrow morning and will be with you about noon.

Meanwhile I will endeavour to explain in a few sentences the position in which I am personally placed by recent events, in order that you may judge whether, under the circumstances, such an interview as has been suggested should take place.

The last meeting of the so-called 'Round Table Conference' was held at Trevelyan's on February 14, now nearly seven weeks ago. At the close of that meeting I believe it was the unanimous opinion of all present that great advances had been made towards agreement, and that there was good reason to hope that a little further discussion might enable all of us to concur in the main lines of proposals intended for the settlement both of the Irish Land and the Irish Government questions.

Speaking some days later Harcourt said publicly that the points of agreement were many and important and that the points of difference were secondary and few.

If this was a correct statement, it would seem that there ought to have been no serious difficulty in arranging a satisfactory settlement, and if this had been done at that time I had good hopes that the policy to which our discussion pointed would be, in the main, accepted by Lord Hartington. In this case either the Government would also have had to accept it, or they must have lost the support of the Unionist Liberals and have given place to others.

This being the position on February 14, I have been surprised and grieved by the persistent refusal of Harcourt, in spite of pressing entreaties, to carry the matter forward or to give any information as to the view taken by yourself of the new situation brought about by our discussion.

The exact nature of the policy on which agreement was possible had been ascertained. It was only necessary to approve

or to reject what we had done in order to settle the question of reunion and the future action of the Unionist Party with respect to the Government. But this necessary information was withheld and the opportunity from which I had hoped so much was suffered to pass away.

Now the situation has been changed by the introduction of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill to the support of which—as far as Second Reading goes—I imagine that the great majority of Unionist Liberals are practically pledged—in default of an alternative policy to which they could give their assent.

If, even at this late hour, such a policy could be arrived at, our future action would be matter for the gravest consideration; but I must frankly say that the unfortunate delay, which has interposed at a critical stage, has created the most serious obstacles to immediate co-operation and has tended to harden and widen the differences which we all deplore.

As regards the recent operation of the Closure Rule and the intervention of the Speaker, I believe that I am in entire agreement with you and I should gladly do anything to assist in getting rid of a condition which seems likely to affect injuriously the authority of the Chair.

I imagine that no change can be made in the rule just passed *during the present session*, and at the present moment the only practical suggestion I have to convey to you is one made to me last night by Randolph Churchill who seems to be very deeply impressed with the danger to our Parliamentary institutions arising out of the present situation. It is that there should be a Conference between the leaders on both sides as to the future course of the debates on the Crimes Bill, and that the Government should concede to the Opposition any reasonable terms that the latter may insist on, with respect to the dates for proceeding with the stages of the measure and the time that may fairly be asked for each important discussion. By such concession all further necessity for a resort to Closure might—he thinks—be avoided and I imagine he would use all his influence to secure a proper understanding.

Of course any question as to the alteration of the new rule would be unaffected by such an arrangement.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

On April 5 I visited Mr Gladstone at Dollis Hill where he was staying. The following is the memorandum of our conversation made at the time:

[*Memorandum*]

Dollis Hill.

April 5, 1887.

Mr G. began by referring to the intervention of the Speaker and said that assuming my concurrence in his desire to amend the new Rule by omitting the Speaker's Veto, he thought that the probability of success would be increased by my proposing the change and that at the same time my action would have a good effect towards reunion as showing willingness to co-operate with old friends where we were agreed and where our agreement could not prejudice directly or indirectly our action on the point of difference.

I said: that the intervention of the Speaker was first proposed by the Liberal Government—that I did not then personally approve of it, though I was content to accept it to carry the Closure Rule—that the present rule seemed to me in the nature of a limitation of the intervention and therefore better than ours. Still I disapproved of it in any form and would gladly do anything to get rid of it but I did not think the Tories would accept any suggestion to this effect while recent action by Liberals made me doubt if my intervention would not be resented by them.

Mr G. repudiated for himself any such feeling, but said he would enquire of A. Morley and see if it existed among his friends.

He then referred to R. Churchill's suggestion with satisfaction at its spirit but said he did not think that the party generally would approve of negotiation or agree to arrangements as to the course to be taken in future discussions on the Crimes Bill.

The conversation then turned on the failure of the Round Table Conference. Mr G. carefully avoided any reference to specific points of difference except with regard to Land Purchase as to which he said that he accepted the idea of employing Irish credit in any such operation in lieu of resorting on a large scale to British credit. He mentioned that he thought a very extensive or complete scheme embracing all the land of Ireland might be found to be unnecessary.

He also said that he did not think that Mr Parnell had been informed in any detail of the result of our discussions, and that he did not believe that Lord Hartington could be brought to agree to anything which Mr Parnell would accept. In fact he considered that Lord Hartington was going back in his public utterances on the question.

I referred to Harcourt's statement that the points of difference were few and secondary and said that if this opinion had been confirmed and a definite agreement arrived at seven weeks ago the situation would now be altogether different. Mr G. said he was not inclined to cry over spilt milk, and that Coercion having now intervened, it filled all the space and nothing else could profitably be considered.

I asked if I was to understand that he thought that the question of Coercion must be fought out in the House and the Country before it could be profitable to make any further attempts at agreement on the main question of the Government of Ireland. He said he should like forty-eight hours reflection before answering positively but that was his present impression and he supposed it was also mine.

I said I found that the delay interposed at a critical stage had brought us to this position and I pointed out that the inevitable results must be to widen the breach and permanently to weaken the Liberal Party.

Mr G. said he had been disappointed that the Unionist Liberals had not taken the course adopted by Mr Winterbotham. I said we did not think we could do so, until we had some security that the settlement of the Irish question would be proposed by him on lines to which we could honestly agree.

He then urged that we should bring out our plan of Local Government and said that although he did not think a Conference could settle such a plan, it might be accepted by himself and his friends if proposed by us, as the best obtainable under the circumstances. I asked him if he did not think that any plan proposed by me would be instantly denounced by Parnell who would thus be publicly pledged against it and could not subsequently accept it even from the hands of Mr Gladstone himself.

Mr G. said he did not suggest that I should put forward a plan but that the Liberal Unionist Party as a whole should do so.

I said that I did not think this was possible.

The general impression left on my mind by the interview was that Mr G. confidently counts on the unpopularity of Coercion to bring about an early appeal to the country and to secure a decision in his favour and that under these circumstances he does not desire to proceed further in the direction of conciliation and does not believe that the Party would allow him to do so.

In July the subject of the Conference again came up on a statement by Evelyn Ashley when a candidate against Trevelyan for Bridgeton and which he said he made on my authority, although he went a little beyond anything that I had said to him. Harcourt demurred and gave his version in a speech at Chelmsford. I at first proposed to publish a reply but on going through the correspondence found it so lengthy and in many parts so personal, that I doubted the wisdom of publishing it. I challenged Harcourt to publish my memorandum on the land question and we mutually gave each other permission to publish the whole of the correspondence if desired. The matter, however, was dropped for the time.

It cropped up again in February 1889 owing to some reference to the Round Table Conference in the House of Commons. Rosebery having stated that Harcourt proposed to publish an account of the proceedings, I wrote suggesting that we should agree to a joint protocol. Harcourt declined and complained that my speeches in Scotland<sup>1</sup> had made a reply necessary. My answer was as follows:

*Not confidential*

40, Prince's Gardens, S.W.

February 21, 1889.

My dear Harcourt,

So it was the lamb after all that troubled the waters! Just look at Morley's Ipswich speech and you will find—

1st. In answer to my request for information as to Gladstonian policy—'Mr Chamberlain knows our policy perfectly well—He knew it at the Round Table.'

2nd. 'At the Round Table we were, if not actually agreed, in sight of one another.'

<sup>1</sup> On February 13, 15 and 16, 1889.



3rd. A long criticism of the 'Birmingham' scheme of Unionist policy,<sup>1</sup> which is, as you know, in substance identical with the proposals discussed at the Round Table.

After all this surely it is unreasonable to suggest that *I* am forcing publication.

I now gather that you intend, without previous conference with me, to publish your own recollection of what passed.

I make no objection—but I shall of course be at liberty, if I differ from your account in any way, to publish my own notes taken at the time and such documentary evidence as I possess.

I had hoped that a preliminary joint examination might have made any discrepancy impossible.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

After some further correspondence Harcourt gave his account which did not appear to me to require elaborate correction so that I again allowed the matter to drop.

On February 8, 1887, while the Conference was still going on, Brett wrote to me that an English friend had called upon him with an account of Parnell's views which it was desired should be communicated to me. An interview between Parnell and myself was also suggested. According to this anonymous intermediary Parnell was in a conciliatory mood and anxious to come to a settlement but the Gladstonians were too stiff and he suggested \*that Morley was the difficulty. A few days later, Brett wrote that Parnell was 'off' and the suggestion therefore came to nothing.

<sup>1</sup> The scheme published in 1888 in the *Birmingham Daily Post* and re-published as *A Unionist Policy for Ireland*.

## CHAPTER X

1887

MARCH 24. I spoke in the House of Commons on the Motion for Urgency for the Crimes Bill. I advocated a remedial measure dealing with the report of the Land Commission and the fall in prices which had made rents unfair. On this condition I was prepared to support the legislation introduced by the Government to strengthen the authority of the law.

April 13. I attended a meeting at Ayr, and on the 15th one in Edinburgh. I had arranged in response to an invitation from some of the representatives of the Crofters to visit some of the Crofter districts with a view to a personal enquiry into the condition and needs of the population. I was accompanied by Mr Collings and on April 16 we were at Inverness whence we proceeded to Dingwall, Lewis and Skye, returning to Glasgow where I addressed another meeting on May 3. We met the Crofters in small meetings throughout the district and heard from them a statement of their grievances. At Stornoway, Inverness and Dingwall at the request of the local people, I addressed meetings on the Irish question but in all other places confined myself entirely to the question of the Crofters. We were extremely well received although threats had previously been used by the Gladstonians of opposition and even violence if we ventured into the country.

On my return home I drew up proposals for legislation which I forwarded to representatives of the landlords and also of the Crofters.<sup>1</sup> The Gladstonians strenuously opposed these proposals

<sup>1</sup>These proposals were printed; a copy is among the Chamberlain Papers; it is headed: 'Private. Crofters and Cottars Migration and Relief Bill.' The Bill was to schedule the counties of Argyll, Caithness, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland. A Crofter Commission was to be set up, with power

and I did not, therefore, feel justified in taking further trouble or bringing them before the House of Commons.

On June 1 I addressed the annual conference of the National Radical Union in Birmingham.

June 14. I was entertained at dinner at the Liberal Union Club in London when I pointed out that the differences with the Gladstonians were widening as the Gladstonian Party were being dragged at the heels of the Irish rebels and English Nihilists.

On July 11 I supported the Second Reading of the Irish Land Bill introduced by the Government in accordance with its pledges when the Crimes Act was before the House of Commons. I took considerable part in the debates in Committee on this Bill and was instrumental in securing several amendments in a Liberal sense.

In August a new attempt was made at conciliation. Mr Gladstone in a public speech had shown willingness to make some concessions to the Liberal Unionists. Many of the rank and file among the Unionists were uneasy and anxious to know what were really the points of difference. The Government was proposing to proclaim the League<sup>1</sup> in spite of the strong advice to the contrary tendered by Lord Hartington on behalf of the Liberal Unionists. I thought that the time had come when it was desirable that we should announce a more definite alternative policy and I feared that if we did not do so our Party would slip away from us and we should incur certain defeat at the General Election. I wrote and spoke to Hartington in this sense but he

<sup>1</sup> The Irish National League.

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to declare over-populated areas in the scheduled counties 'congested districts'. Any crofter or cottar in a congested district might apply to the Commission for a new holding, which the Commission might assign to him if satisfied as to his ability to pay a fair rent and to stock and cultivate the land. Tenants were to pay a rent of 4 per cent of the value of the holding for forty-nine years, and would then become owners of the land, paying thereafter an annual tax of one-quarter of the rent. The Commission was to have powers of compulsory land-purchase; disagreements with owners as to the price of land were to be settled by arbitration. The Treasury was to issue £1,000,000 to the Commission for the purchase of land, at 3½ per cent interest. The principal was to be repaid over a period of forty-nine years.

was opposed to the announcement of any policy on our behalf. Lord Randolph Churchill took the same view.

On August 13 Morley wrote to me, after a conversation we had had on the previous night, that he was going to see Mr Gladstone at Hawarden; and on the 14th he wrote:

I found my host in an extremely friendly frame of mind towards *anything* that pointed towards effective accommodation. He was pleased both at my going, and at the incident which prompted my going.

For the specific suggestion that communications as to a plan might do good, he would not be disinclined, but he doubts whether the moment is yet come. That moment ought to be preceded by public declarations on our part that the course taken by you on some occasion or other has been in a remarkable degree for the common advantage and good. Such declarations might, he thinks, be justly made in connection with your line on the Irish Land Bill now before the House of Commons. He recognizes your great services in the course of the transformation of that measure. Such recognition would naturally pave the way to further accommodation.

Two other considerations weigh with him. 1. It is necessary to move gradually on account of the irritation, etc., etc., in our own party as to one whom they regard as much the most formidable of our opponents in argument, and whom my host himself described to me as exhibiting more energy, suppleness and brains generally than 'all the rest of the lot put together'.

2. Would not accommodation be discussed more hopefully when events had ripened, and made it easier for you (if, after communications, you should think it desirable), to bring others of the group to the same view? Of course, you must be aware how strong is the desire in his mind not to leave behind him a party schism, for which history may hold him responsible. Therefore, he dreads any step which might in some degree commit him to what might prove only sectional accommodation.

So much for this. My own notion, after thinking over what passed, is that if, on my return three weeks or a month hence, you feel inclined to reopen the matter with me, good might come of it. Events would have 'ripened' possibly to a sufficient point. I think that an informal and unofficial inter-communication of this

kind—which is, I take it, what you have in your own mind—would be of advantage. My address for the next fortnight, if you care to write, is Hotel Riffelalp, Zermatt.

On consideration, I thought it due to Harcourt to say to him that from the tone of our conversation, I felt that another attempt should be made, and that therefore I was determined to go to Hawarden.

Of what I have called the specific suggestion, I said nothing, and the responsibility of the journey was wholly mine *ab initio*, and down to the end. He heartily concurred in my project, you may be sure.

Yours very truly,  
JOHN MORLEY

After Morley's return from Switzerland I wrote to him:

*Private*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
September 18, 1887.

My dear Morley,

I am always glad to receive a letter from you, but I did not expect one unless you had anything further to say in reference to our last conversation.

The situation appears to me to be more hopeless than ever. I read Mr Gladstone's last speeches and letters as rather a withdrawal than an advance in the line of conciliation.

It is clearly his interest to make the least possible concession that will secure him a majority or help to reunite the Party and if he thinks (as he probably does with his sanguine disposition) that the tide is flowing quickly in his favour, it is natural that he should be indisposed to make any sacrifice to bring back his former colleagues.

On the other hand I need hardly point out to you that if the existence of the Government were at stake all of us who still entertain fears of Mr G's policy and believe that it must lead to separation would be welded together and would undoubtedly put aside every other consideration to prevent the National disaster that we dread.

In such a case the merits of the question under consideration would sink into insignificance before the ultimate consequences of any hostile vote.

Therefore whatever may happen in the country I do not think it likely that there will be a general election for three or four years unless some agreement as to future policy can be arrived at; and when it does come it may be fought by new men and on other issues than those that are now before us.

The outlook is not very comforting: three or four years of bitter wrangling and personal animosity and then—anarchy or reaction.

You will see that I am almost as pessimist as you are, but, in the words of the Swedish schoolmaster I met in Lapland, 'The time makes for the melancholies.'

I leave on 29 October. I hope to be back at the opening of the Session but it is not possible to foretell the time that will be occupied by the Commission, and I hope before I return to see something of the chief sights—both in Canada and the States.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

He replied:

*Private*

95, Elm Park Gardens,  
South Kensington, S.W.  
September 21, 1887.

Dear Chamberlain,

I suppose that your forecast is the most probable, and it certainly 'makes for the melancholies'.

Yet I feel that it is rather discreditable to us all that things should have come to their present desperate pass. There must be some more or less rational way out of it, if we could only find it. It seems to me as if the difficulties were mainly at bottom personal. I know that difficulties of that sort are just the most intractable. Still the real perils of the crisis for the future of the country are great enough and certain enough to drive me to hope that they might be overcome.

However, hope without a plan is idle, and I have no plan whatever.

Yours very truly,

JOHN MORLEY

The correspondence closed with my reply:

*Private*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
September 22, 1887.

My dear Morley,

I do not think that the difficulties are personal.

If an agreement could be found that could settle the question, I would undertake to go out of politics altogether as my part of the bargain.

But I am bound both by honour and duty to fight to the death against proposals which in my judgment constitute the greatest National danger with which we have ever been threatened.

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

At the beginning of September I was requested by the Government to accept an appointment as Chief Commissioner to endeavour to negotiate a treaty for the settlement of the fishery dispute with the United States of America and at once accepted the mission.

On August 20 I addressed a meeting of the National Radical Union at Highbury.

In the House of Commons I voted against the proclamation of the League on August 26.

September 29. I delivered my annual address to my constituents, and in October, from the 10th to the 15th, I was in Ulster where I attended great demonstrations at Belfast and at Coleraine besides making many minor speeches at other places.

October 25. I attended a meeting at West Islington and on the 29th started to America.

The correspondence in connection with this mission and the private letters Lord Salisbury and others addressed to me are bound in a separate volume in the library at Prince's Gardens.

Before leaving for America I had a further correspondence with Lord Hartington in which he reiterated his opinion against the advisability of producing any alternative plan, and I agreed to follow his opinion but at the same time put on record my dissent from the purely negative policy which he had adopted.

## CHAPTER XI

1888 to July 1892

ALL attempts at reconciliation and the reunion of the Liberal Party having now failed, the next few years, from 1888 till the General Election of 1892, were occupied in maintaining and strengthening the Unionist alliance. The situation was extremely difficult—especially at first. The Conservative Party had their old traditions and methods and were inclined to move slowly or not at all. Lord Hartington, who in 1885 had been the most moderate of Whigs, found little difficulty in accepting a negative policy. He showed no initiative and was inclined on all occasions to wait for the Tory lead and at the same time was most destructive in his criticisms of all new proposals and policies. On the other hand the Liberal Unionists in the country were restive at the idea of working with, and especially under, new allies. They had been accustomed to look on all that bore the name or was connected with the idea, of Toryism as altogether unacceptable and detestable. They were determined not to sacrifice their Liberalism, and were pledged to reforms which they had hitherto been accustomed to identify with the Liberal Party. Unless this important section of Liberals, whose sole difference with Mr Gladstone was the Home Rule question, and who were eager to find a compromise on this, could be kept true, the Gladstonians would speedily outnumber the Conservatives in the country, and would return to power with a majority sufficient to carry their policy. The position of Liberal Unionists in the constituencies was not a pleasant one. They were reviled by their former friends, and did not thoroughly trust, nor were they trusted by, their new allies. They were without efficient organization, isolated, and uneasy; and accordingly many did go back to their old party as the by-elections showed; while others, less strongly



Liberal in their convictions, frankly joined the Tories, ceasing to call themselves Liberals at all.

Under these circumstances I felt that it was the duty of the Liberal Unionist leaders in the first place to exhaust every possibility of reconciliation, and to satisfy themselves that no concessions could or would be made by the Gladstonian leaders which would remove the objections to Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bills. Secondly, these efforts having been exhausted, it was necessary, if the Liberal Unionist Party were to be permanently maintained as a separate party, that it should be distinctly Liberal as well as Unionist, and should have a positive as well as a negative policy. Thirdly, it was important to press on the Unionist Government the desirability of giving some satisfaction to the demands for social and political reform, which had hitherto been chiefly put forward by Liberals. It would be fatal to the Unionist Party if at the General Election they could show nothing but a record of blank resistance to Mr Gladstone's policy.

So far as the leaders were concerned these objects were thoroughly understood and fairly appreciated. My own relations with them were cordial, frank, and satisfactory. Great consideration was shown by them to the suggestions which I made from time to time and many of them were accepted. Where they were unable to meet my views, they were always ready to admit that the Liberal Unionists would be at liberty, without imputation of disloyalty, to defend their own opinions in the House of Commons and in the country, although of course it was understood that we should not do this in cases in which the supreme object of our alliance and the existence of the Unionist Party would be endangered. At all times the Conservative leaders had to deal with a certain restiveness on the part of a portion of their more extreme followers who would have liked to see the Liberal Unionists absolutely fused with the Conservatives and did not understand how fatal such an arrangement would be to the projects of the common cause. Personally, and on a great majority of subjects, Salisbury, Balfour and W. H. Smith, were ready to take as broad and liberal view as I could wish, but they were sometimes restrained by pressure from some of their own followers. On the

Church Question it was always understood that they would stand firm against any proposal for Disestablishment, and I did not at any time press them to alter this conclusion, although I claimed my own right to speak and vote in its favour. During the whole period from 1888 to 1892 there was never any serious difference as to the actual policy of the Government which in the least threatened the existence or the cordiality of the alliance.

It was much more difficult to maintain a friendly feeling between the rank and file throughout the country, or to appeal to either section without running some risk of offending the other; and even in Birmingham difficulties arose which at one time threatened to be very serious.

During the whole of this time the Gladstonians under Mr Gladstone's guidance made their chief attacks on the Liberal Unionists. The gravamen of their charge was that in joining the Tories we had abandoned our Liberalism and were compelled by the conditions of our alliance to oppose Liberal measures. In order to strengthen this accusation they lost no opportunity of out-bidding all the Government proposals, and of putting forward Bills and Resolutions to which in principle we were unlikely to object, although we might be compelled to vote against them in order to maintain the Government in office. In the debates arising on these motions cautious steering was necessary as we had to uphold our Liberal opinions without endangering the existence of the Government; and although the position was sometimes critical I do not think that the Gladstonians gained much on the whole by these encounters. They did, however, undoubtedly secure many votes at the elections by their claim to be the sole representatives of Liberalism and heirs of Liberal policy and traditions. I was so much impressed with the importance attached to party names that I was led to throw out suggestions in speeches made in 1887 for the formation of a national or central party, which might include the more Liberal of the Tories as well as the Liberal Unionists, and to which the more moderate of the Gladstonians might be attracted. Randolph Churchill took up the idea warmly, but Hartington was cautious as usual and threw cold water on it. The time did not

appear to be ripe for such a movement, although I referred to the matter again from time to time in speeches made in the succeeding years.

I endeavoured at this time to work generally with Randolph Churchill but soon found that our differences as to the policy to be pursued were too great to be bridged over. Randolph was perhaps naturally irritated at his continued exclusion from the Government although it was of course by his own act that he had become an outsider. He was ready to press the Government in a Liberal direction; but, unfortunately as I thought, he was willing to do this in a way and to an extent which might seriously weaken them. My idea on the contrary was to confine all pressure to private representations, and, having gained all that was possible by this means then to make the best of the situation in public. On the Land Bill, as well as on the proposal for the Parnell Commission, and again on the Land Purchase Bill, Randolph criticized severely the Government proposals and once or twice came into some sort of collision. The project therefore of any close alliance came speedily to an end.

1888

On February 15, 1888, the Treaty regarding the Fisheries was signed at Washington. It was subsequently rejected by the Senate in August of the same year by a strict party vote, the Republicans who were in a majority being determined that the Democratic Government should not have the credit of settling the question. Fortunately I had insisted on arranging a *modus vivendi* as a temporary device to tide over the time which would be taken up in obtaining ratification of the Treaty, and also with some idea in my own mind that if the Treaty failed it might take its place. This anticipation proved to be correct, and the *modus vivendi*, although originally for only twelve months, was renewed from time to time and remained in operation for years afterwards.

I returned home on March 10, and saw Lord Salisbury immediately, who was extremely cordial and offered me the Grand

Cross of the Bath, which I of course declined. He acceded, however, to my request for honours for my colleagues, and Tupper was made a baronet, Lord Sackville a G.C.M.G., while Bergne and Maycock, my secretaries, received recognition.

On March 28 I received the freedom of Birmingham and was subsequently entertained by the Mayor at dinner, on which occasion I made a non-political speech.

On April 9 I was entertained at dinner at the Devonshire Club, when Lord Granville took the chair, and Mr Childers, and H. H. Fowler attended. The other Gladstonian leaders, including John Morley, declined.

On April 18 I attended a meeting of the Radical Union in the Town Hall when I made a political speech on the situation.

On March 19 in the House of Commons Ritchie introduced his Local Government Bill. I had been in communication with the Government in respect of the terms of this Bill as to which there had been some idea of restricting the franchise. I had however made it a *sine qua non* of my support that the franchise should be the same as for the councils in the boroughs, and I referred to the pledges given by Lord Randolph Churchill on behalf of the Government in support of my claim which was ultimately conceded. I was therefore able to support heartily the main principles of the Bill in a speech made April 16, although I strongly advocated the reform of the vestries as a part of local government reform, and urged that the control of the police might safely be given to the County Councils. I approved of the Licensing clauses which were subsequently strongly opposed by the Temperance Party and had to be withdrawn. These clauses would, however, have given to the new County Councils funds and the power to make a reduction in the number of licences. They would also have given them some additional powers of regulating the hours, and would have been a great step in advance. The Temperance Party, led by the United Kingdom Alliance declared absolutely against the principle of compensation, and as a number of Conservative members were hesitating in their support it was impossible to push these proposals through the House.

On April 5 I attended a meeting to form the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association which was rendered necessary by an attempt on the part of the Gladstonians to capture the old Birmingham Liberal Association. They arranged by concert to attend the meetings for the elections of the Committee, and in the great majority of wards carried their list and excluded everybody who was known to be a Liberal Unionist. The new Association soon attracted the great majority of those who had been active on the old Association, and at the first annual meeting the Grand Committee already numbered between 2,000 and 3,000 members.

On March 21 I opposed Parnell's Arrears of Rent Bill as going altogether beyond the necessities of the case. I expressed, however, a strong opinion that there might be a real grievance owing to arrears which had arisen from excessive rents since reduced, but I pointed out that the reduction of these arrears would not by itself be any sufficient relief unless the tenant were at the same time relieved in similar proportion from his other debts to shopkeepers and usurers. This had been offered in 1887 by the Government at my suggestion and then rejected by Mr Dillon. I again urged that this course should be taken, but declined to vote for a Bill which would infallibly cause the refusal of rent all over Ireland.

On April 25 the Gladstonians moved to accompany the English Local Government Bill with local government for Ireland. I opposed this proposal on the ground that it was impossible to deal with two such vast interests in the same Session but strongly protested against any idea of indefinite delay.

On May 1 I spoke in the House of Commons in favour of legislation and public works for the relief of the Crofters.

On May 25 I spoke in Birmingham on Education, advocating free schools and warning the denominational party against any idea on their part of interfering with the practical compromise which had been settled in 1870. The warning was made necessary by the Report of the Royal Commission which had suggested further advantages to voluntary schools threatened by extinction by competition of Board Schools and increased demands on the part of the Education Department.

On May 28, at the first meeting of the Grand Committee of

the new Birmingham Association, I spoke of the advantages of the Unionist alliance and developed a Unionist policy for Ireland, including public works in the congested districts, land purchase and provincial councils. This policy, which was merely a development of the suggestions made by me at the Round Table Conference, had been submitted to Mr Bunce, and published by him with comments and arguments in successive articles in the *Birmingham Daily Post*. They were subsequently republished as *A Unionist Policy for Ireland*. I had previously strongly urged Hartington to discuss this policy with the Liberal Unionist members, and afterwards with the Conservative leaders, with a view to its joint adoption as a positive alternative to Mr Gladstone's policy. Being unable to secure any support from him I desired immediately to publish the proposals in my own name, but refrained at his request. He did not, however, object to the publication, and it was ultimately made in the columns of the *Daily Post* and without my signature. It may be pointed out that this policy was subsequently adopted in principle by the Government so far as public works and land purchase and county government were concerned, but the Liberal Unionist Party lost the advantages which I think they might have gained from it owing to Hartington's unwillingness to let it go forth as an official programme.

On June 30 Childers wrote to me that he approved generally of the *Daily Post* scheme as a stepping stone, and asked whether something could not be done to approximate the two sections of the Liberal Party.

In a letter received at the same time<sup>1</sup> from Canon MacColl he said:

I happened to be at Hawarden when the first article in the *Birmingham Post* appeared, and I asked Mr Gladstone his opinion of it. 'It is excellent,' he said, 'so far as it goes, though there are some things in it which I don't like. And if Mr Parnell were to ask my opinion of it—which he is not likely to do—I should say "Accept it by all means".'

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated June 28, 1888.

On July 24 the Parnell Commission was appointed. In private conversation with the Government I had urged them to meet Parnell in this matter as far as possible, so that he should have no cause to complain of the tribunal. The great object seemed in my opinion to have a full enquiry and at the same time to avoid the appearance of pressing hard upon a political opponent. I would therefore have taken the Parliamentary Committee suggested by Parnell himself, and I pointed out that, although such a body might be very inefficient for the purpose, yet they would probably find out whether or not there was any real ground for the serious accusation of *The Times*. If there were, it would be perfectly possible at a later date to carry the matter further, and in the meanwhile Parnell would be committed by the acceptance of his own proposal. As, however, the Government desired to appoint a Commission in preference I supported it in the House.<sup>1</sup>

A Committee on Small Holdings was appointed at my suggestion and, with the approval of the Government, I was elected chairman. It did not take evidence till next year.

On July 28 I reviewed the Session at Highbury.

On September 19 I was at Bradford where I defended the Crimes Act and the way in which the authority of the law had been vindicated by Mr Balfour in Ireland. In a second speech the next day I repeated the declaration I had previously made in the House of Commons that I would do nothing to destroy the present Government as long as the Government which would follow it was committed to Home Rule. I said that I believed a constructive policy, both for Ireland and England, was absolutely in the interests of the Unionist Party, but that I should press it on the Government as a friend and not in any hostile spirit.

September 26. I was at Nottingham where I again defended the administration of Balfour in Ireland, which was at this time the subject of bitter attack in all the Gladstonian speeches. They

<sup>1</sup> Compare, however, the extracts from Chamberlain's letters of July 7-25, 1888, to Miss Endicott, printed in Garvin, *op. cit.*, ii. 386-8. Mr Garvin's comment on Chamberlain's action at this juncture is: 'He had taken his effective part in defeating the Irish leader's demand for a Parliamentary Committee to deal specifically with the forgeries; and in substituting a legal tribunal to judge an insurrectionary movement.' (*op. cit.*, ii. 388.)

were convinced that coercion was so unpopular in England that the attempt to maintain the law in Ireland would break down and would lead to the defeat of the Government. In this speech I also pressed for details of Mr Gladstone's Irish policy.

On November 3 I went to America again to be married, and did not return to Birmingham till December 24. In the meantime a short Autumn Session was held at which of course I was not present.

1889

On January 8 we received an Address of Welcome at Birmingham when I made a non-political speech.

On January 23 I addressed my constituents and called attention to the withdrawal of Home Rule from prominence in the Gladstonian speeches. I criticized the Limehouse programme of Mr Gladstone<sup>1</sup> and insisted on its insincerity inasmuch as it would inevitably be postponed to Home Rule if Mr Gladstone came back to power. I advocated a Unionist policy of Free Schools, and facilities for tenants to become owners in England, and of public works and land purchase for Ireland. I also commented strongly on John Morley's foreign policy as disclosed in a speech in which he had spoken of the British Empire as an 'empire of swagger'.

On January 25 I was president of a meeting to hear an address from Lord Wolsley, and I spoke on imperial obligations.

On February 13 I spoke at Glasgow and again commented on the Gladstonian programme as being 'only political bird-lime'. I repeated my conviction that a negative Unionist policy was fatal, and advocated the reforms mentioned in my Birmingham speech and in addition legislation for Crofters.

At a dinner given to me by both sections of the Glasgow Liberal Club next day I urged the postponement of Home Rule in order to deal with Education, Land Purchase, Temperance and Local

<sup>1</sup>In a speech at Limehouse on December 15, 1888, Gladstone spoke of several measures which a Liberal Government might carry after Home Rule had been achieved. They included 'one man one vote', shorter Parliaments, and Disestablishment in Scotland and Wales. Gladstone's references to these subjects were, however, very non-committal.



Government. I pointed out that the only real point of difference was that the Gladstonians insisted on treating Irish Local Government on the basis of a separate nationality; and argued that if this were postponed there would be many years of work on which we could all agree and with regard to which we might receive the support of the moderate Conservatives.

On February 15 I spoke at Dundee on the Irish question and February 16 again at St Andrew's.

February 28. I opposed a vote of censure in the House of Commons, and in the course of my speech pressed for some definite declaration of policy from Mr Gladstone. I again pointed out the numerous points of agreement between moderate men of all parties, and urged that Land Purchase and Local Government should be first dealt with before we entered on the controverted question of a separate Parliament. In the course of my speech I pressed upon the Government the suggestion that the so-called political prisoners should be treated as first-class misdemeanants—a course which was subsequently adopted.

On April 15 Mr Albert Bright was elected by a majority of over 3,000 to succeed his father<sup>1</sup> in the Central Division. A serious difference arose with Lord Randolph Churchill and a section of the Birmingham Conservatives in reference to this election as they claimed this seat for Lord Randolph, and accused the Liberal Unionists, and myself especially, of breach of faith in the matter. The facts were that some time previously Lord Randolph had stated his intention of giving up Paddington to stand for the Central Division if Mr Bright were compelled by illness to retire. In conversation with him, and with Sir James Sawyer and other local Conservatives, I had said that if he came forward I would use my influence with the Liberal Unionists in Birmingham in the hope of inducing them to accept him. Since that time Randolph Churchill had taken a strong line against the Government and had made himself extremely unpopular with its supporters in the House of Commons. If he had stood it would have been very difficult to induce the Liberal Unionists, or even some of the Conservatives, to support him, and

<sup>1</sup> John Bright, a Birmingham M.P. since 1857.

I did not feel certain that he would be returned. When it became clear that Mr Bright's illness would have a fatal termination, I spoke to Randolph Churchill in the House of Commons and asked him to tell me definitely what his intention was. I reminded him of my promise and told him if he stood I would carry it out, but that at the same time I thought it right to say that circumstances had somewhat changed and I could not be certain that his candidature would be successful. He said that he was not going to leave Paddington, which was a safe seat, for any doubtful chance, and therefore he would decline an invitation. When the vacancy was declared, a deputation from the Birmingham Conservatives pressed him very strongly to stand; but after some hesitation he put himself entirely in the hands of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Hartington and myself. We unanimously advised him not to stand, although I again told him that if he did I should feel myself pledged to give him any support in my power. When his final decision became known the section of the Conservatives led by Sawyer and Rowlands were furious and threatened to oppose Bright and even to run one of themselves. Several of the Conservative leaders intervened and Balfour especially came to Birmingham and made a most excellent and conciliatory speech which had the desired effect of preventing any open opposition, although some of the leaders sulked in their tents and a very bitter feeling prevailed for a long time afterwards.

On April 24 I spoke at the annual meeting of the National Liberal Union; and the next day at Bingley Hall where there was an immense demonstration attended by Lord Hartington and many other Liberal Unionist leaders.

On May 28 I spoke at Bacup chiefly in answer to Sir William Harcourt who had been more than usually offensive in his attacks on the Liberal Unionists.

On July 29 I spoke in favour of the Report of the Committee on Royal Grants; and in answer to John Morley who moved an amendment against the compromise accepted and supported by Mr Gladstone.

July 31. I spoke at a dinner of the Liberal Union pointing out that the Gladstonian Party was now being led by its extreme

section—the English Nihilists represented by Mr Labouchere.

August 10. I reviewed the session at a meeting of the Committee of the Western Division at Highbury, and referred to differences which had arisen with the Tories in Birmingham.

September 2. I presided at the meeting of the Grand Committee when I pointed out the Liberal character of the legislation already passed by the Government and advocated further reforms in England and Ireland.

September 17. I spoke at Huddersfield urging that we should return to the old Liberal policy for Ireland which consisted in the maintenance of law, and at the same time, the redress of grievances. In a second speech the next day I again referred to the possibility of a National Party.

October 1. I spoke at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

October 16. I spoke at Plymouth when I entered on a review of the causes which had led to the secession of the Liberal Unionists and of their proceedings from that date.

October 17. I spoke at Bodmin especially directing my arguments to the Nonconformists.

On November 4 a Conference was held with the representatives of the Conservatives in Birmingham with reference to the representation of the City. The Conservatives urged that their numbers gave them a right to a larger representation. We did not deny this, but claimed that under the National compact it was arranged that where seats had been held by the Liberal Unionists previous to the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, and these Liberals had become Liberal Unionists, the character of the representation should not be changed. We pointed out that, although this rule was hard upon the Conservatives in Birmingham, there were many other places, as for instance London and Liverpool, where the Liberal Unionists were almost unrepresented. The Conference was unable to come to a final decision on the main issue, but unanimously agreed to refer the question to the arbitration of Lord Salisbury and Lord Hartington. These leaders gave their decision in our favour twelve months later.

In November we made a lengthened visit to Egypt where I had great opportunities of seeing the leading Englishmen engaged

in the work of government and reorganization, besides the native ministers and other representatives of Egyptian opinion. I summed up my impressions in a letter annexed to this addressed to Sir Evelyn Baring, now Lord Cromer.<sup>1</sup> We returned to England February 9.<sup>2</sup>

1890

On February 16 the draft of a Free Education Bill was submitted to me by Mr Smith, and was in the main entirely in accordance with my views. I had some time previously seen Lord Salisbury and pressed him to include this question in his programme. I found him perfectly willing to do so if he could be assured that the change could be accomplished without sacrificing the voluntary schools.

On February 21 I opposed an amendment to the Address which required the Government to deal at once with Free Education and the control of voluntary schools. I pointed out that the Government was pledged to Free Education, but that the cost of abolishing denominational schools would be a fatal objection to any attempt to bring them compulsorily under complete popular control.

March 11. I defended the course of the Government in reference to the Parnell Commission which had reported on February 13, and showed that, although Parnell and his friends had been acquitted of direct complicity with crime, they had been shown to be guilty of intimidation and other offences which indirectly at any rate were the cause of the crimes actually committed in Ireland.

March 24. I spoke in Birmingham on the work of England in Egypt and protested against the idea of any speedy evacuation.

April 28. I supported the Government Irish Land Purchase Bill, but on this occasion, and subsequently, urged amendments which would have the effect of giving greater power to local authorities in connection with the adoption and administration of the system. I was not willing to postpone land purchase until local government had been created, but suggested that clauses

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> 1890.

should be introduced providing that, when County Councils had been instituted, they should have some kind of veto on the pledging of local rates and contributions, and that if they agreed to put the act into operation a proportion of the rents should be reserved as their profit and they should be made the instrument for collecting the rents. By this means I thought we should get rid of any direct relations between the tenants and the Imperial Government and should secure public opinion in favour of the payment of rents, inasmuch as the community, through the County Councils, would have a direct interest in the fulfilment of the tenants' obligations.

On April 10 I made a speech at the formation of a Liberal Unionist Club in Birmingham, and took occasion to emphasize the differences between the new Liberals and the old, pointing out that not only in the matter of Ireland, but also in reference to many English questions, the political morality of the present Gladstonian party was loose and unsatisfactory.

On May 7 I addressed a meeting at Oxford, where, in the course of the speech chiefly on the Irish question, I referred again to the amendments which I desired to see introduced into the Land Bill.

On May 13 I presided at a great dinner to Lord Hartington at the Crystal Palace to congratulate him on the re-establishment of his health.

On the 19th I presided at the meeting of the Grand Committee in the Town Hall and defended the Government policy with regard to tithes, licensing and the Land Purchase Bill. I contrasted the work actually performed by the Unionist Government with the previous action of Mr Gladstone before 1886, and described the Gladstonians, who claimed to be a party of progress, as being only a party of promise.

The licensing clauses involving compensation to publicans had now been withdrawn. I had advised the Government to summon a meeting of the Party and to endeavour to push them through, but after consideration the Cabinet came to the conclusion that this would be unpopular with many of their own friends and that it would be better to abandon them altogether.

In June a proposal was made for carrying over Bills, in the stage to which they had been brought, to another Session. I approved the proposal and a Committee was appointed to consider it, but the opposition was so strong that it had to be withdrawn and an Autumn Session decided upon.

On August 2 I reviewed the Session at a Garden Party at Highbury, and on the 12th we went for a visit to America, returning on November 19.

On the same day, November 19, Lord Salisbury's and Lord Hartington's award was published, determining the question of the future representation of Birmingham in favour of the contention of the Liberal Unionist Party. Lord Hartington, however, accompanied his award with a letter strongly urging the greatest consideration on the part of the Liberal Unionists, and this was interpreted as a suggestion that we should not in future insist strictly on our rights in the matter.

On November 17 the Parnell Divorce Case was decided, and as a result of Mr Gladstone's subsequent action in refusing to recognize Mr Parnell, the Parnellite party were split, and their internal dissensions left them little time for Parliament so that the Government was enabled to prosecute its business with greater speed and success.

I addressed the following letter to Lord Hartington on the question of the introduction of the local authority into the Land Purchase Bill and also in reference to the objections which had been taken by Dr Rigg and others to Free Education. As regards the former, I again urged my views in the House of Commons on the second reading of the Bill but owing partly to the disorganized state of the Opposition there was very little discussion at this stage, and the House adjourned on December 9.

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
November 21, 1890.

My dear Hartington,

We have had a most interesting holiday, and have come back in the best of health and spirits. I am just now overwhelmed with

arrears of work and correspondence. I am not certain that I can clear them off by Monday and if not I must miss the dinner at Lord Derby's. I shall however try to be there.

I am uneasy about two things.

I. Are the Government going to alter the Land Purchase Bill in any way to meet my views and those expressed by Parnell as to the necessity of associating the local government of Ireland when it is established with the proposals for purchase? It is not decent to insist on mortgaging the rates and the contributions from the Exchequer without giving the local authorities some voice in the matter. I feel that the question is urgent and this is the psychological moment for dealing with it. The opposition would be disarmed and in their present demoralized condition could offer no effectual resistance to an amended scheme.

If the Government have finally decided to do nothing then I must ask you and them to consider that my responsibility is discharged. I do not think I can offer any further support to their measure or take part in the debate unless the opposition propose an amendment in my sense when I must support it. In any case I will strive to prevent my abstention or action from doing any injury to the Unionist cause or the general position of the Government.

II. As to free education, I do not gather from Rigg's Memorandum that he really knows what the Government proposals will be. But I have no doubt that he is right in anticipating possible danger. If the Scotch precedent is followed (and I know of no better) there must be an average scale of compensation for the abolition of fees. This will be below the sum received in high fee schools and above that in low fee schools. The former will suffer and may be extinguished if they do not increase their subscriptions from voluntary sources. This is, I take it, Rigg's grievance, and the only answer is that the change is inevitable. The Gladstonians are pledged to it with the additional provision that all existing voluntary schools must go under popular management. If therefore the Government proposal is rejected, its Methodist opponents will find themselves scourged with scorpions instead of whips.

The argument ought to be conclusive, but if it is not I agree that the Government cannot carry their measure. Can they afford to shelve the question? I think not. They will have a sufficient

surplus and if for the second time they devote it to other purposes no one will be able to pretend faith in their sincerity and there will be a tremendous defection of working class votes both in towns and in the counties. The dilemma is a serious one. I have always foreseen it and have urged that free education should be kept if possible to the last moment and then included without the details of a bill in the programme for the dissolution. I fear this is now too late. The Government have really committed themselves and unless they can hide away the surplus they must deal with the surplus in the next budget. There is only one alternative. Namely to introduce the land purchase and local government bills simultaneously and then at the first appearance of obstruction to declare that the purpose of the opposition factiously to prevent business is so evident that there is no alternative but a dissolution before the budget. In this case free education would be offered as one of the measures of the future if the Government were successful. I need not point out the bearings which Parnell's present position would have on this policy.

If you wish to show this letter to any member of the Government I have no objection.

I hope you are well. You have been doing splendid work and I am almost ashamed to have been away so long.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

On December 16 I addressed the Committee of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association on the subject of a proposed joint committee with the Conservatives intended to bring about a more cordial feeling and to prevent differences in the future. I expressed an opinion that all idea of reunion with the Gladstonians must be given up as long as they were controlled by the extreme men of their party, and I again referred to the possibility of a National Party.

On December 31 I spoke to the Committee of the Western Division and dealt with the disclosures made in Committee Room No. 15, especially as they went to show the insincerity of Mr Parnell and his friends in their pretended acceptance of the Home Rule Bill of 1886 as a final settlement.



In this month I published an article in the *Nineteenth Century* on the methods of dealing with obstruction in the American House of Representatives and offered a suggestion for adoption in England.<sup>1</sup>

## 1891

On January 5 I attended a meeting on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Cannon Street Provident Society and spoke on the progress of the working classes during the last fifty years, and thrift.

January 15. At East Birmingham I referred to the new demands now made by Mr Parnell and to the apparent further surrender contemplated by John Morley and the Gladstonian Party.

January 27. There was a joint Unionist meeting of Liberals and Conservatives in the Town Hall, the first of the kind that had been held since the split in the Liberal Party. There was considerable anxiety as to the result, but the meeting was an entire success and marked another step in the progress towards a cordial alliance between the two sections for which I had been working during the last few years. I took occasion to review the circumstances which had led to the alliance and its results up to date, and appealed to both sections to cement the Union.

February 21. At a meeting of the Liberal Union Club I spoke of the necessity of contemplating a new programme in view of the General Election and dwelt on the importance of the Labour Question.

March 3. In the House of Commons I opposed an abstract resolution for 'One man, one vote', and urged the necessity of dealing with redistribution whenever any further reform of the franchise was undertaken.

March 11. I spoke on the Second Reading of Mr Collings's Small Holdings Bill which on my urgent representations was

<sup>1</sup> 'Shall We Americanize Our Institutions?' (*Nineteenth Century*, xxviii. 86:-75.)

accepted by the Government and passed without a division. On this occasion the Government undertook to deal with the subject in future legislation.

March 17. I spoke in favour of Captain Grice-Hutchinson, the Conservative candidate at the by-election for Aston. I then advocated free education, small holdings, and, for the first time, some system of old age pensions. At Portsmouth on April 2 I returned to the subject in greater detail, and pointed out that the Gladstonian promises must be illusory as they were pledged to deal first with Home Rule which would require an indefinite time for discussion.

At the request of the Government I undertook the chairmanship of a Royal Commission appointed to consider the effect of coal-dust in causing and extending explosions in Mines. It held many sittings in 1891, 1892 and [ ] and reported in [ ].<sup>1</sup>

April 17. In the House of Commons I repeated the arguments I had already used in favour of the introduction of the local authority in any Land Bill, but expressed my intention to vote for the Bill as it stood if the Government declined to accept my suggestions.

April 21. I presided at the annual meeting of the Grand Committee which now numbered 8,500 members with a subscription list of £1,000 a year. I spoke of the reforms still to be accomplished by the Unionist Party and as the most urgent I specified district and parish councils, small holdings, free education, and old age pensions.

May 13. A Parliamentary Committee was formed to consider the subject of old age pensions, and I was elected chairman. This Committee sat many times in 1891, and having settled certain principles referred the consideration of details to a sub-committee consisting of Dr Hunter, Mr Mallock, Mr Rankin, and myself. The Committee met at Highbury on October 24 and agreed on a scheme to be submitted to the actuary. This was subsequently altered in conference between the actuary and my-

<sup>1</sup> Two blank spaces have been left at this point in the MS.; Chamberlain evidently intended to fill in the dates later. The Commission reported in 1894.

self and with some further amendments by the Parliamentary Committee was adopted in 1892.

June 23. I presided at a dinner of the Liberal Union Club to T. W. Russell and took the opportunity to vindicate the policy and programme of the Liberal Unionists.

On the 29th I spoke against Fowler's amendment to the Free Education Bill which demanded the control of the voluntary schools.

I took part occasionally in the debate in the Committee of this Bill and was successful in obtaining some amendments extending the age to which free education should apply, etc.

In the month of July M. Clemenceau came from Paris to see me as a result of a correspondence through Admiral Maxse.<sup>1</sup> I met him July 7 at Maxse's house, when he gave a résumé of the situation and expressed his regret that France was in a position of comparative isolation. He did not believe in any alliance with Russia and desired closer relations with England. The two points of difference at present were Egypt and Newfoundland, in neither of which any great interests were concerned, although in the former there were sentimental considerations which made concession difficult. Still both questions might be settled in our favour—a free hand given in Egypt, and an arrangement made for the extinction of French rights in Newfoundland, if a *quid pro quo* in the shape of moral support to France in her natural desire to make some satisfactory arrangement with Germany. He said that when he had first spoken of the matter the Triple Alliance had not then been signed and he had thought it possible that we might give advice to Italy which would keep her from renewing it. That was now impossible. In the course of further conversation he said that a treaty might be made pledging England to strict neutrality in case of war breaking out between France, Germany, and Italy, in consideration of a guarantee that France

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Frederick Maxse (1833–1900) was one of Chamberlain's oldest friends. Their friendship dated from the period of the Education League. He was the original of the central character of George Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career*. See also *My Portrait Gallery* by Viscountess Milner (Maxse's daughter).

would in no case attack the integrity of the Italian Kingdom nor be the first to declare war. He expressed a desire that what he had said should be mentioned to Lord Salisbury, and declared that important members of the French Government knew of his visit and would be informed of all that had passed. He repeated several times that he did not desire or anticipate war with Germany, but wished that France might be in a position to negotiate with some chance of success instead of remaining isolated without even moral support from any other power. I asked him if I rightly understood his proposition to be—first, a free hand for England in Egypt with some provisions to meet reasonable French susceptibilities as for instance in regard to French schools and privileges to French subjects. Second, the extinction of French rights in Newfoundland, with fair compensation to France in Africa and elsewhere. Third, guarantee of neutrality of England in the event of war between France and Italy commenced by the latter. Fourth, guarantee that France would respect the integrity of Italy in all events. Clemenceau said that I had correctly repeated his ideas and that he had no word to add or to take away. He agreed, however, that the present moment was not favourable for any negotiations, and said that the discussion was one which under existing circumstances must necessarily be prolonged.

I saw Lord Salisbury in reference to this conversation and repeated Clemenceau's proposals. Lord Salisbury said that his policy was to keep absolutely clear of engagements leaving the country to take action which it might think fit in the event of a war. Any attempt to detach Italy from the Triple Alliance would be resented by Germany, and the friendship of the Central Powers of Europe was essential to us. As long as France was afraid of Germany she could do nothing to injure us. Newfoundland was a small question and as to Egypt we were in possession and time was on our side. He preferred therefore to continue to wait. He added that the hatred of Hungary for Russia was the keynote of the situation; but for this Austria would come to terms and draw Germany after her. The action of Hungary was not, however, absolutely to be counted on and he thought the most important

factor in the future might be Bulgaria—the character and energy of the people being astonishing.

I asked him if he considered the Russian occupation of Constantinople would be as injurious to British interests as was supposed at the time of the Crimean War. He said 'No', that Lord Palmerston had made a great mistake and ought to have accepted the Emperor Nicholas's proposals. Russia with Constantinople would be more vulnerable than Russia in the Black Sea, but the situation had been altered by our policy and the rise of the Balkan States.

Subsequently, in answer to an enquiry through Maxse, I told M. Clemenceau that I had communicated his views to Lord Salisbury, but that Lord Salisbury had not authorized me to make any communication in reply, and that I understood M. Clemenceau's own opinion to be that no negotiations could be conducted to a successful issue at the present moment.

July 25. We left for a holiday in Germany, returning September 12.

October 13. I addressed a meeting in Wales dealing chiefly with Disestablishment and Land Questions.

On the 21st I was at Sunderland where I referred to foreign policy and denounced the intention to evacuate Egypt which had been attributed to Mr Gladstone and Mr Morley.

November 18. I addressed my constituents in the Town Hall, and contrasted the Unionist legislation of the Government with the programme of the united Liberal Party before 1886, saying that the latter had been exceeded in practice by the Unionist Government. I dealt again with the question of old age pensions.

November 25. I attended the luncheon in the Town Hall given by the Unionist Party in Birmingham to Lord Salisbury and again spoke on the Unionist alliance.

December 15. I went to Edinburgh where I made a series of speeches. In the principal one I dealt principally with the question of Ulster, of local government in Ireland, the case of the Crofters, and old age pensions.

1891

This year saw the final breach of my long friendship with John Morley.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the year 1870,<sup>2</sup> it had continued to grow in strength till 1885 when the Home Rule Bill was introduced [*sic*]. When Morley was asked to take the Irish Secretaryship he came to me professing great hesitation and doubt of his qualifications. I strongly urged him to accept, and even said that I thought it his duty, as by that time his own views had finally settled into approval of some form of Home Rule. Although I was myself entirely opposed, and did not believe that any practicable scheme could be devised, I thought it only right and natural that he should under the circumstances do his best to assist Mr Gladstone to find a solution. A short time afterwards, I told him that I greatly feared lest our political differences should influence our private friendship, and that I saw only one way to prevent this which was that we should mutually agree not to refer to one another in any public speech or criticism. I said that we could fight our battles without coming into actual conflict, like the knights belonging to the same family in the civil war, who, when they met each other, lowered their spears and passed on. Morley, however, rather stiffly refused, saying that he did not think it was necessary or possible.

In the course of a correspondence with Labouchere which I assumed to be absolutely private and confidential, I made some sharp observations on Morley's conduct which I subsequently heard were communicated to him and to the Cabinet. As soon as I was informed of this I sent Morley a message by Harcourt expressing my great regret and apologies. In the public discussion which followed in 1886 I avoided all reference to Mr Morley in my speeches but he continually attacked me, sometimes, as I considered, offensively. In 1888, in acknowledging an

<sup>1</sup> The breach did not in fact prove final, although their former close friendship was not restored.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, 1873. (Garvin, *op. cit.*, i. 157.)

autograph of Tennyson's for which I had asked, I made some reference to his attacks, and reminded him that he had twice had it in his power to heal the breach in the Liberal Party—once when I left the Government, and when an earnest representation from any of my colleagues would have secured further consideration of Mr Gladstone's impossible policy, and might have ended in the framing of a scheme which we could all have accepted; and secondly, at the Round Table Conference.<sup>1</sup> In reply, he referred me to my advice to him to accept the offer of Irish Secretary. He complained that after that I

practically dropped me. I well remember how at my first Cabinet (rather an incident in a man's life) you barely said 'Good morning'—to my extreme dismay and chagrin. In view of this line, it was impossible for me with any hope to play the part—which I might have played with real utility—of intermediary between Mr G. and you. I approached you again at the Cabinet dinner at Spencer House—and was again definitely repulsed. If you had allowed me to keep on good terms with you then, all might have gone differently in the Cabinet.<sup>2</sup>

I assured him in reply, what was the fact, that I was entirely unconscious of any coolness or unfriendliness at the time to which he referred. If I did not take more notice of him at the Cabinet he could surely understand that that was due to the fact that I myself was strained almost beyond bearing by the extraordinary and critical circumstances in which I was then placed.<sup>3</sup> The matter was not carried further at the time, but a bitter attack made by him in a speech induced me to refer with some acerbity to his conduct in a public speech in the Birmingham Town Hall at the beginning of 1889. This brought a letter from him, dated January 24, in which he said that he intended no insult and was sincerely anxious to avoid any sort of provocation. The following correspondence took place:

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain to Morley, April 29, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> Morley to Chamberlain, May 1, 1888.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain to Morley, May 1, 1888.

*Private*Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.

January 25, 1889.

Dear Morley,

I am very glad to know that there was no intent to wound in the language of which I complained.

You will however see by the comments in many papers that the impression I received was shared by others.

In connection with this subject may I ask you to read over again—in cold blood—your speech at Ipswich delivered just before I left for America?

I have hardly ever referred to you in public since this controversy began and never offensively. I was therefore much pained by the tone of the speech of which I now remind you. I have always foreseen that political differences might conflict with personal regard and have desired to avoid this if possible. On several occasions—at the risk of misconception—I have suggested to you that we two might fight our battles without individual reference. You have not seen your way to such an understanding and you have attacked me in almost every speech you have made.

It is not surprising that in these circumstances I have suspected something more than the ordinary zeal of a political leader.

Yours truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

*Private*

95, Elm Park Gardens, S.W.

January 26, 1889.

My dear Chamberlain,

In regard to the speech at Ipswich, I frankly admit that in the heat of the moment some expressions escaped from me at which you might have taken not unjust offence. But I hoped from your letter of some three weeks ago or more, that you had allowed this to fall from your mind. Accordingly, I intended to be particularly careful this time to steer clear of anything in the slightest degree likely to hurt you, or irritate you. That is the simple truth, and I understand you to accept it so.

You are really *stupendously* misjudging me in suspecting me, as your last word or two imply, of motives extra-political. Every motive and sentiment and impulse, outside the desire to



make a good fight on a political question, drew me, and draw me strongly, the other way. But I will spare you any apologia on this head.

Yours truly,  
JOHN MORLEY

*Private*

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
January 27, 1889.

My dear Morley,

I accept your assurances with the greatest pleasure and will think no more of what gave me pain before.

I hope it may be possible in the future to avoid all occasions for either giving or taking offence.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

The matter dropped for a time but in a debate on free education in February 1890 Morley made another attack on me which led to the following correspondence:

February 22, 1890.

Dear Morley,

In the debate last night Harcourt accused me, on the faith of your recollection, of breaking a melodramatic pledge that I would not join any Government that would not carry out Free Education.

Later on you attempted to support this charge by a quotation from a speech of mine at the Victoria Hall in which I said that it would be dishonourable for me to take any place in any government which *excluded* this question. In the same speech you will find the statement that I did not understand that Mr Gladstone would *exclude* from consideration those developments of the Liberal Programme which I had been pressing on public attention.

You will see that the charge is absolutely unfounded and that the pledge I really gave was that I would not join a Government

which excluded Free Education and the other proposals that I had advocated from consideration. I claimed that they should not be negatived in anticipation but I did not demand that they should be immediately adopted.

I call your attention again to the subject because this is by no means the first time that you, while professing to regard our former friendship, have done your best to lower a discussion on a great question of public policy to the level of a personal controversy.

By this action you may secure the cheers of your Irish supporters, but you make the continuance of any kind of friendly relations between us almost impossible.

Last night throughout my speech I scrupulously avoided a word of personal accusation against former colleagues and I confined myself to developing the opinions on Free Education which I have long entertained and which you will find set out in my public speeches before 1886 and notably in one delivered in Bradford a week after the speech in the Victoria Hall.

Notwithstanding this reserve on my part you and Harcourt think it consistent with your position as leaders of a Party and with your private relations to myself, to ignore my argument and to meet it by bitter and almost venomous personal attack, founded on a recollection which the facts show to be extremely defective.

I make some allowance for the heat of discussion but I ask you now in cool blood, to review the circumstances and to let me know whether in future I am to regard you as a personal friend separated from me by political differences or as a political opponent animated by an intense personal animosity.

I am,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

*Private*

95, Elm Park Gardens, S.W.

February 24, 1890.

Dear Chamberlain,

I was going to write to you this morning, even if I had not got your letter.

I am heartily sorry for the scene of Friday night. I think it was likely enough that I was led by the heat of the moment into a vehemence of demeanour which gave you just offence. I much

regret it. We were all three, however—you and Harcourt as well as myself—in a state of considerable excitement, for good reasons or for bad; such excitement is contagious; and this must be my excuse.

It takes no consideration to answer your question as to the future. Except on two or three occasions of what I felt to be excessive provocation from you—I have never varied in my strong desire to save all that I possibly could from the apparent wreck of the greatest and closest friendship of my life. I am in the same mind now. I want to save all that I can—and I am always as vexed as I was on Saturday and Sunday when one of these vile *rencontres* happens. 'Personal animosity' is not in my line—and least of all to you. That is the simple truth.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN MORLEY

Following on this correspondence, I had an interview with Morley at the House of Commons in which he said that he had regretted his refusal to accept my original proposal that we should not attack one another in public in regard to our political differences, and he was now quite willing to make an arrangement of that kind. I willingly agreed and it was understood that, except so far as it might be necessary from time to time to quote statements of fact upon which argument might be founded, we would carry on the controversy absolutely without any personal allusion. Our friendly relations were thereupon resumed and Morley dined with me pretty frequently during my residence in London in that year and the next. In October 1891, however, Morley broke the compact by a most bitter and violent attack upon me in a speech made at Manchester. I addressed to him the following letter:

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
October 27, 1891.

Dear Morley,

In my speech at Sunderland last Wednesday I tried to show that your policy was mistaken and that its results would be injurious.

I carefully avoided any imputation of motive and any attack on personal character.

In your reply at Manchester last night, you deliberately set yourself to prove that my motives were dishonest and my proceedings dishonourable.

I consider that the line you have chosen is unjust and altogether unworthy of the man who wrote five years ago—‘It is always a delight to me to think that *dignitas mea*—whatever it may amount to—has been *inchoata, aucta et longius porrecta* [sic]<sup>1</sup> not by three men but by one—and that one yourself.’

Yours truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

He replied:

95, Elm Park Gardens, S.W.

October 29, 1891.

My dear Chamberlain,

I have used no language imputing dishonesty, nor have I ever allowed that odious thought to lodge in my mind, since our differences began. What I cannot but think is that you are so carried away by dislike of Mr Gladstone, that at Sunderland you struck two most unfair blows at him, and in one of them you struck also a very dangerous blow at the principle of cabinet co-operation and its obligations.

As you know, we have said nothing about one another—you and I—for a long time, with a very great sense of comfort on my part. I hoped that this might lead us much further in time in the same direction. But I saw, or thought I saw, in your Welsh speech and still more markedly in the speech at Sunderland, signs of a different feeling. Was I wrong? In any case, you attacked Mr Gladstone in a way and in a tone that strike me as deplorable. Surely I should be a very poor creature if, merely to secure peace for myself, I left him to stand alone? I did not interpret political comradeship in that way in the days of which you remind me, when I was as loyal and staunch a defender of yourself as ever man had.

I have never forgotten the obligations to which you refer. In spite of what happened in 1886, I could and would have repaid

<sup>1</sup> The original MS. of Morley's letter is not among the Chamberlain Papers. No doubt it read '*prorecta*'.

them. When you talked to me a year ago of 'revision of conditions' I fancied openings would gradually occur. But you have made my hopes more and more impossible. These embittered attacks on Mr Gladstone, so incessantly reiterated—how can you expect me to take no notice? If in defending him, I attack you who are his assailant, how can I help that?

I hate and detest contentions between you and me. Some of our friends enjoy a *mêlée*. I don't. I often think that I should leave Parliament but for Mr G. So long as I am there, I should despise myself—and so would you despise me—if I did not stand firm by him.

Yours very truly,  
JOHN MORLEY

To this I answered:

Highbury,  
Moor Green,  
Birmingham.  
October 30, 1891.

Dear Morley,

Your letter justifies and, therefore aggravates, the offence of your original attack. You *did* charge me with dishonesty unless words have lost their meaning. Why else did you pile up extracts separated from their context and deliberately brought together to prove a shameless inconsistency?

What is the description which applies to one who 'for paltry purposes hits below the belt'; and by what adjective otherwise than 'dishonest' would you stigmatize 'conduct unparalleled in the worst times of our political history'?

What is the excuse for this virulence of language in speaking of one to whom you admit some obligation and who has never made a similar attack upon you throughout the controversy in spite of gross and reiterated provocation?

It appears that you are animated by a chivalrous sentiment which makes it necessary for you to accuse an old friend of dishonourable conduct in order to defend a new one who is at least able to take care of himself without the protecting *ægis* of your shield.

Your assertion that I am animated by personal dislike of Mr

Gladstone is totally unfounded. I have never attacked him except in his public capacity and for his public acts. I have never said anything of him half as bitter as has been said quite as freely by Lord Hartington and Mr Bright and I may add by yourself before 1886.

But I shall not be debarred from repeating on all suitable occasions my strong sense of the mischief he has already done to his party and to his country and my conviction that his return to office would be the signal for grave disaster.

I do not wish to prolong this correspondence. You promised not to attack me personally, my motives or my character. You have failed to keep the agreement into which you voluntarily entered. At least in the future I shall not be under limitations which I feel bound strictly to observe, but which you think yourself at liberty to disregard whenever you consider that Mr Gladstone's sacred personality is being treated with insufficient reverence.

Yours truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

Simultaneously with this private correspondence, a correspondence on the same subject was carried on in *The Times* newspaper, and as a result our personal relations came to an end.

In May 1891 I published in the *North American Review* an article on 'Some Favourable Aspects of State Socialism'.

1892

Owing to the death of the Duke of Devonshire in the previous December, Lord Hartington was called to the House of Peers. Most of the papers of all parties assumed that I should succeed him in the leadership of the party in the House of Commons, but a few urged the superior claims of Sir Henry James. Sir Henry James wrote to me at once a very kind letter saying that the leadership would fall to me as a matter of course, and disclaiming any idea on his part of becoming a competitor. He offered, if it were necessary, to arrange for a meeting of the party. I replied

stating that I did not desire further responsibility, and would certainly not accept it unless it were offered unanimously by my colleagues. A meeting of the party was accordingly held on February 8 and as in the meanwhile some articles had appeared in *The Times* and in the *Standard* suggesting that I might properly moderate my views in consideration of a position of greater responsibility, I thought it desirable to point out the folly of this and the importance of maintaining in all respects the Liberal principles which we had not deserted when we left Mr Gladstone on the Home Rule question. I stated my intention of continuing to support by vote, and in any other way that seemed fitting, the disestablishment of the State Church. The meeting, however, unanimously elected me, and I made my first speech in this capacity on the Address on February 11. On this occasion I taunted the Opposition, who had threatened a fighting session and a general arraignment of the Government, with their extremely pacific début. I challenged them to produce their plan of Home Rule; and, by quotations from both sides, showed that there was a clear contradiction between the present aims of the Parnellite and Nationalist Parties and the declarations made by Sir William Harcourt and other prominent Gladstonians. At the same time I called attention to Morley's and Gladstone's speeches on Egypt, and asked for explanation. Morley who made a poor and ineffective reply endeavoured to minimize the purport of his references to evacuation.

- February 17. I presided at the annual meeting of the Rural Labourers' League.

February 18. I spoke a few words in approval on the introduction of the Irish Local Government Bill.

March 8. I was the guest at the Liberal Union Club, and on March 23 I spoke in favour of the second reading of the Miners' Eight Hours Bill, pointing out that a reduction of the hours was desirable in laborious trades and would not necessarily decrease production: legislation was a more convenient way of securing the result than strikes, and there was no question of principle involved as there were many precedents for interference with adult labour.

March 30. I spoke at a meeting of the London Nonconformist Unionist Association.

I also took part in the discussions in Committee on the Small Holdings Bill.

Owing to the trial and conviction of Mr Hastings for breach of trust, the East Worcestershire seat became vacant, and Austen was invited to stand as Liberal Unionist candidate. Some of the Conservatives, however, opposed his selection, demanded pledges from him on the subject of Church disestablishment, and threatened to run a candidate of their own. He refused to give the pledges required, and pointed out that by so doing he would probably lose the support of many of his own friends, as well as placing himself in the unsatisfactory position of abandoning his opinions in order to secure votes. It was also strongly urged that if pledges against disestablishment were to be asked from Liberal Unionists, pledges in favour of disestablishment might be asked from Conservatives by Liberal Unionists. The controversy at one time appeared to be likely to lead to grave results, but better counsels prevailed. Mr Balfour, and other Conservative leaders communicated with the local leaders with whose policy there was no general sympathy in the Conservative Party. Finally they withdrew their demands and accepted Austen as candidate, and he was elected unopposed in March.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion which thus took place on the relations between the two sections of the Unionist Party did much to clear the air and may be said to have finally closed the controversy which had been more or less active since the time of the election of Mr Bright in the Central Division. The Conservatives, both in Birmingham and the district, henceforth worked cordially with the Liberal Unionists; and at the General Election there was perfect union and no defections on either side.

On April 29 the annual meeting of the Grand Committee<sup>2</sup> was held. At this time the Committee numbered 11,476, and the

<sup>1</sup> The MS. continues: 'The following statement of the position was written by me and published in the *Daily Post*. There follows a cutting of a long letter from the *Birmingham Daily Post* of January 29, 1892, setting forth the same argument in detail and signed, 'A Liberal Unionist'.

<sup>2</sup> Of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association.



subscription list was nearly £1,500. I spoke on the Irish Question especially with regard to the case of Ulster which had been brought into prominence by the great Conference recently held in Belfast.

On May '23 I spoke on the Second Reading of the Irish Local Government Bill, defending the guarantees which had been introduced into the Bill, and saying that if an honest attempt were made to use it, it would give to the Irish people even more than the powers and privileges already possessed by County Councils and Borough Councils in this country.

On May 25 I attended a meeting of the leaders and the whips of the two sections to finally decide the date of dissolution. I strongly urged postponing it till the autumn, but stood alone, the chief objection being the difficulty of keeping the supporters of the Government together in view of an early dissolution. I believe, however, that if the dissolution could have been postponed, we might easily have gained twenty more seats at the General Election.

On June 7 I spoke to the Liberal Unionist Association in reply to a speech delivered by Lord Rosebery at a Gladstonian demonstration in the Town Hall in which he had severely attacked the Liberal Unionists, and thus began the campaign for the General Election. During its course I spoke four times in my own division, and once in the other divisions which were contested. In addition I spoke for Liberal Unionists in Handsworth, Lichfield, and East Worcestershire, and for Conservatives in North Warwickshire, Coventry, North Worcestershire, Wednesbury and Walsall. We held besides this a joint Unionist demonstration in the Town Hall and I also attended a meeting in the Free Trade Hall at Manchester. The success in the Midland district was remarkable, as we carried all the Birmingham seats by enormous majorities and thirty out of thirty-nine seats in the three counties of Warwick, Worcester and Stafford.

## Appendix A

The document to which Chamberlain apparently refers on page 143 is in O'Shea's hand-writing and reads:

Parnell or { to be given an opportunity of bringing } forward  
O'Shea { to bring }  
by Resolutions [as early as possible] the scheme of Irish  
administrative reform (Co. and Central Boards) as detailed  
in my memoranda given C. in January. Government  
to accept in principle.  
to declare its sympathy with it.  
to acknowledge it worthy of favourable consideration.  
serious consideration.  
? Concession with regard to some Ulster redistribution—which?  
Feb. 26.

A covering note from O'Shea reads:

March 2.

I enclose the memo. I made last week in case I should be 'approached'. You will see that I did not go so far as to ask for the introduction of a Bill this session. Please tear the precious document up.

## APPENDIX B

Henry Labouchere to Joseph Chamberlain

Reform Club,  
Pall Mall, S.W.  
July 22, [1885].

My dear Chamberlain,

Healy favoured me with his views during three hours to-day.

I told him, that we were sure to win without the Irish, but that if he and his friends wished for any sort of Home Rule, he must understand that the only chance was to ally himself with the Radicals and to support you. I said that I had tried to impress this upon Parnell, but that he talked rubbish about Grattan's Parliament, and seemed to me to be thoroughly unpractical.

Healy said, that Parnell in his heart cared nothing for the Irish—particularly since a mob ill-treated him in 1880. He regretted to be obliged to admit, that personal feeling actuated his leader. He felt his dignity offended by his arrest, and his present feeling was revenge on Gladstone and Forster.

I suggested a rebellion. But he said that this was impossible, because the present mania of all Irishmen was hanging together, for they attributed all their troubles to divided councils.

• He said that Parnell is very cunning. He generally finds out which way the feeling is amongst his followers, before he suggests anything, but in one or two cases, he has put his foot down, when he obtained his way.

I asked him about Davitt. He laughed at the idea of his being of any use to us. He is a very vain man, he said, and a nuisance to us. We should like him to go against us openly, for this would smash him. He cares neither for Tories nor Radicals. If we joined the latter, he would intrigue with the former, and *vice versa*.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the present position, he says, that there never was

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of this paragraph is far from clear. The first 'us' apparently refers to the Liberals or Radicals; thereafter 'we' and 'us' throughout the rest of the paragraph evidently refer to the Irish Nationalists.

anything which could be called a treaty with the Conservatives but that there was an understanding that, if they helped the Tories to turn out the late Government, and generally supported them during the remainder of the Session, there was to be no Coercion. 'Churchill talks to us vaguely about Home Rule, but we do not pay much attention to this. We are now paying our debts that we have incurred.' According to present arrangements, the Party is to put out a manifesto calling upon all Irish in England to vote solid for the Conservative candidates. This policy, he continued, was adopted in order to hold the balance.

I went into figures to show him that we should win without the Irish, and said that the balance policy would only end in their tying themselves to a corpse.

He admitted that this was true, and said that personally he was a Radical, but that it was impossible, 1 to trust the Liberal Party. 2 to hope that the Liberal Party could do anything even if they wished to, owing to the House of Lords.

'No alliance,' I said, 'is worth anything which is not based upon mutual interest. We shall win at the election, but we shall have to count with the Whigs. The English Electors will be indignant at your conduct, and we shall naturally take our revenge on you for your supporting the Tories. Now if you would join us, we should be strong enough to hold our own against Whigs and Tories. We want your votes in the House of Commons; you will find that you will do nothing without ours. What do you say to Chamberlain's scheme of Home Rule in the *Fortnightly*?'

'It is mine,' he said, 'there are a few things that I object to in it, but in the main, it would satisfy me. But Chamberlain could not carry it. Even if he got it through the House of Commons, the Lords would throw it out.'

Well, we went on discussing. At last he said: 'Can we have any assurances that Chamberlain's scheme would be one on which a Liberal or Radical Ministry would stand or fall? Will Gladstone declare for it?'

'What would you do, if you could be certain of a big scheme forming part of the Liberal platform?' I asked.

'Our party really is guided by about six men. What we decide,' he said, 'the others accept. I would propose that we do not compromise ourselves with the Tories, that we should issue no manifesto, leaving Irish electors to vote as they like. When

the plan is put forth in the next Parliament, we should have to say that it does not go far enough, but it would merely be a dummy opposition. Whether I could carry this, I don't know, but I think that I could.'

He is leaving London for the Cork Assizes to-morrow, where he expects to make £50. I thought first of offering to lend him this, and he felt inclined to remain here, but I did not know how he would take it. Finally he said that he would be back at the commencement of August, and that, if any arrangement could be made, he would do his best to further it.

There are one or two points in your scheme, that he wants modified, and these I will explain to you, when I see you at the House, and you have a moment's spare time.

He told me to tell you, that those who wished that you should be ill received in Ireland would not have their way, and that you may count upon a perfectly friendly reception.

This letter is long—but I thought that you would like to know Healy's ideas, as he is by far the most honest and the ablest of the Irishmen. It is a pity that some Fenian does not 'remove' our friend Parnell.

It is all very well expecting to win the elections—but the Irish vote is an important factor, and if only we could square the 80 Irish in the House, and turn them into your supporters, Whigs and Tories would be dished.

Certainly there is no love lost between the allies. W. O'Brien, Healy told me, declines to speak to any of them—regarding them as scoundrels with whom they are allied because of the Coercion Acts.

Yours truly,  
H. LABOUCHERE

## APPENDIX C

### Joseph Chamberlain to Sir Evelyn Baring<sup>1</sup>

Dear Sir Evelyn Baring,

At the close of what has been a most interesting visit to this country I venture to submit to you a brief summary of the result of my investigations which may possibly interest you as being the impressions of an independent observer free from all official responsibility.

I am well aware that the shortness of my stay and my ignorance of Arabic must detract from the value of the conclusions that I have formed, which are therefore open to correction and criticism by more competent and experienced authorities. But I have availed myself of information derived from many quarters and it is only after comparing the various and sometimes contradictory opinions I have received with the results of my own observation that I take leave to trouble you with this short abstract.

The new régime which we established after the suppression of Arabi's revolt must be judged by the answer that can be given to the question—What benefits have already been conferred by it or may yet be expected from it by the great mass of the Egyptian population?

On the whole the reply to the question by any impartial person must be favourable. The state of things in Ismail's time was so bad that any change at all could only be for the better.

Then, justice in any civilized sense of the word was unknown and the native administration was arbitrary, capricious and corrupt, and was carried out by the ordinary methods of cruelty and tyranny practised in barbarous countries.

The finances of the State were completely disorganized and its necessities required an onerous taxation, made still more oppressive by the unscientific way in which it was levied and the universal system of official extortion by which it was accompanied.

<sup>1</sup> Undated. The copy of this letter is in Chamberlain's own hand-writing. It was evidently written early in 1890, just before leaving Egypt.

The *corvée* and the conscription for the army, which were instituted as measures absolutely necessary for the security of the state and the protection of its agricultural interests, became in the hands of corrupt officials a further instrument of injustice and oppression:

And lastly the unfortunate peasant, who was expected to meet every conceivable exaction under pain of physical punishment found himself confronted at the outset with the necessity of conciliating rapacious officials before he could obtain the supply of water without which any cultivation at all was impossible.

The reforms instituted under the present Khedive have sensibly ameliorated a condition of things which must infallibly have brought the country to absolute ruin and the existence of which was a continual incitement to and justification of revolution.

The changes which have been effected in the system of conscription and the total abolition of the *corvée*, which has just been decreed appear to me to be entirely satisfactory and both of them are calculated to bring home to the people at large the advantages of the present régime.

The improved system of collecting the taxes is equally good in principle. The peasant is assured of the amount he has to pay and of the times of payment and he is not liable to irregular and capricious demands of uncertain amount, enforced at the will and pleasure of the officials.

But I think it most unfortunate that the confidence which the population were beginning to feel in the new system should have been shaken by the anticipation of the taxes in certain districts at the suggestion of the local authorities. In my opinion it would have been better to run some risk and even to incur some loss rather than to allow the peasants to suppose that the laws and regulations which have been solemnly announced to them were paper ordinances to be ignored whenever the authorities found it convenient to do so.

It would be presumptuous in me to discuss the reorganization of the finances and the general arrangement of the Foreign Debt. On these matters I can say nothing with which you are not already familiar. The result of the prudent and honest administration of the last few years is seen in the greatly improved credit of Egypt and it may be confidently expected that before long the enormous burden on the country of its foreign obligations may be sensibly

reduced and that thereby funds may be set free for the relief of the taxpayers and for the more active prosecution of public works and national education.

These benefits are however still in the future and up to the present time it must be confessed that the taxpayer has received no considerable relief in the way of reduction of the legal amount of the burdens imposed. In a country like Egypt where the intelligence of the people is in a backward state it is natural that they should pay more attention to direct than to indirect results. The cultivator sees that an additional tax is demanded for the abolition of the *corvée*—that the tax on the cultivation of tobacco is greatly increased—that the railway rates for produce have been in some cases augmented—and he is apt to attach more than their due importance to these additions in comparison with the relief he has indirectly obtained from the cessation of the illegal exactions to which he was formerly subject. I am perfectly sensible that all has been done that could be afforded up to the present time but I am satisfied that the Government of the Khedive will not attain to full popularity until it has been enabled to make direct and positive reductions in the amount of the taxation now levied on the cultivators of the soil.

Meanwhile the abolition of the professional tax and the repeal of petty and vexatious imposts not worth the cost of collection are steps in the right direction and of happy augury for the future whenever a reduction of the interest on the debt enables the advisers of the Khedive to develop their financial policy.

Of all the changes which have been made in the course of the last few years, the most satisfactory in its economical results and the most thoroughly appreciated by the people is that affecting the operation of the Ministry of Public Works and especially of the irrigation department. Not only has the supply and distribution of water been increased by a scientific application of all the means at the disposal of the authorities but the administration of this most important branch of Egyptian government has been purified from the suspicion of corruption until the justice and impartiality of all its operations are universally recognised.

If it were possible in Egypt as in the United Kingdom and some other European countries to submit the question of the continued existence of the Ministry to a popular vote or plebiscite, I do not doubt that the strongest claim of the Khedive's Government to



the support of the electors, would be found in the experience which the population have already had of the advantages derived from the improved administration of the irrigation department.

I fear that the reforms in matters relating to the public security and to the administration of justice, however well intended, have not been equally successful in strengthening the position of the Government.

As an Englishman I may naturally claim to put a high value on the creation of an independent judiciary and on an equitable and impartial enforcement of the law of the land. In theory these advantages have been conferred upon Egypt under the new régime, but in practice the system leaves much to be desired both in respect of the prevention of crime and also in the security which it offers to the majority of the people that equal justice shall be dealt out to all His Highness's subjects.

The complaints made against the new courts resolve themselves into two categories. In the first place it is alleged that they are timid and dependent and that although actual corruption has become rare yet that in many cases the judges are answerable to the influence exercised by persons of weight and position. This is an evil incident to a new system established in a country where hitherto personal influence has prevailed over law and right. As time goes on it is possible that the judges will acquire a sense of independence and personal dignity which will render all suspicion of subservience impossible. The only immediate and complete remedy for the evil now complained of would be the association of European judges with the Natives in every tribunal and I am assured that this was the principle laid down by Nubar Pasha when the Mixed Tribunals were first established. I do not think it within my province to discuss the advisability of adopting this principle generally but it is clear that without it some additional supervision will be absolutely necessary in order to secure the confidence of the people in the impartiality of the new Courts.

The second class of complaints refers to the delay of justice, to its costliness owing to the practice of centralization and to the adoption of a complicated procedure of doubtful wisdom even in a European country and totally inapplicable to Oriental conditions and requirements. It appears to me that in all cases of minor importance a more summary procedure would be most desirable and at the same time the principle of delegation might

be carried much further than it is and a single judge might be deputed to visit every centre of population and to deal on the spot with minor offences and civil cases involving small amounts.

The alterations would however leave untouched the main allegation against the present system which is that it fails altogether in its duty of detecting and punishing crime.

In the last few years the returns show that the number of serious offences in both Upper and Lower Egypt have increased and the authorities have failed to arrest or to secure the conviction of the criminals. The cause of this failure is not far to seek. The old system, arbitrary and even barbarous as it was, terrified the criminals and secured their punishment. It was accompanied however by circumstances which made it a National scandal and it could not be reintroduced without provoking foreign interference and possibly internal revolution. But the new system is defective in as much as it involves a divided responsibility and throws obligations on the wrong persons. The Police, the *Parquet*, the *Juge d'Instruction* and the *Mudir* are all involved but none of them are really responsible. If it be necessary to adopt a European system in its entirety I must say that the English one appears to me more suited to the majority of the cases than the one which has been copied from the French. With us the police who have local knowledge and access to all the facts of the case collect the evidence and submit it to the committing Magistrate who if satisfied on the subject sends the accused for trial to the higher Court. If the case is one which the Government is bound to undertake the Attorney-General or some other Counsel appointed for the purpose conducts the prosecution.

As applied to Egypt this system would mean that the police would prepare the evidence and submit to the *Juge d'Instruction*. He would then send the case to the tribunals and the *Parquet* would prosecute from a brief supplied to them without interfering at all in the previous enquiry.

I understand that a proposal has been made to give larger powers to the *Mudir* to enable him to conduct the 'instruction' and throwing on him the chief responsibility for the detection and arrest of the criminals.

I venture to think that this would be a fatal mistake and would inevitably lead to a recurrence of all the abuses of the old system. If the *Mudir* were corrupt or inefficient or tyrannical it would

place in his hands the widest possible opportunities for the malpractices which have made Oriental justice a byword among civilized nations. On the other hand his local knowledge and his influence with the *Shaiyks al-Balad* would be of the greatest service if they were honestly and uprightly used to secure the ends of justice.

The saying attributed to Nubar Pasha—'*pas de justice sans Européens*' has real relevancy and importance in this connection and in my opinion no greater benefit could now be conferred on the population especially in the provinces—nor one reflecting greater credit on or more likely to strengthen the administration—than a reform which would associate the Europeans with the native authorities in the preliminary stages of criminal investigation. If the police force was strengthened by the addition of a few more English officers conversant with the Arabic language and if these were associated as assessors with the *Mudirs* and *Wazirs* in the investigations or instructions which take place on the commission of a serious offence I am confident that the authors of the crimes of violence and brigandage which have caused so much discontent and alarm would be brought to justice while at the same time the independence and authority of the Tribunals and of the local authorities would be in no way interfered with.

The *Mudirs* or *Wazirs* would preside at the instruction and would be solely responsible for their decisions. The Europeans would attend to advise but not to control these officers and the mere fact of their presence would be a guarantee against the abuse of authority which must otherwise inevitably follow the entire surrender of responsibility and power to Egyptian authorities.

I have dwelt at some length on this subject because I am assured that at the present moment it is the most urgent of all the reforms which remain to be undertaken. The popularity of the Khedive and of his advisers suffers from the feeling of insecurity which prevails. The responsibility for it is divided between them and the British Government which maintains His Highness's authority against both external and internal foes. We have therefore a joint interest in remedying a patent defect but this interest is much more direct and urgent in their case than in ours. Whether our occupation be popular or not no one doubts our ability to

maintain it as long as we think necessary but when we leave, the permanence of the present constitution and of the dynasty and government resting upon it will depend entirely on the extent to which they have secured the confidence of the mass of the people and have proved their ability to provide for the welfare and security of the whole population.

I have already incidentally referred to education as one of the matters to which attention may be directed whenever the state of the finances permits of a more liberal expenditure. I am aware that this subject has engaged your special consideration and I cannot doubt that the Khedive's Government will feel the importance of creating a class of natives of trained intelligence from whom the officials of the future may be selected.

I have only in conclusion to apologize for the length of this letter which has been prompted solely by my deep interest in the welfare of Egypt and the stability of its institutions.

I am, dear Sir Evelyn,

Yours very truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN

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